STRIKES: A STUDY IN INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

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STRIKES—A STUDY IN INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
BRITISH EXPERIENCE BETWEEN
1911 AND 1947

by

K. G. J. C. KNOWLES

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FOREWORD

THIS book was planned to cover developments up to the end of 1947. There are therefore few references to events after this date, and indeed it would hardly be possible yet to do justice to the many problems that have arisen from the nationalization of some of the main industries. Because few studies of strikes have been published in this country, the main sources of material are two: firstly the official and quasi-official publications, and secondly references in books, pamphlets, and articles on related topics. While the former are well known, a list of the latter would be likely to involve either invidious selection or tedious enumeration. There therefore seemed little value in presenting a formal bibliography; but it is hoped that the reader will be able to find the references he needs with the aid of the index and the extensive notes.

There are many people whom I must thank for their help. My research assistant, Mrs. Kathleen Glasser, was indefatigable in collecting and preparing material at every stage, and the book owes much to her efforts. Also, the staffs of a number of institutions — among them the Registry of Friendly Societies, the Ministry of Labour, the National Coal Board, the Railway Executive, Lloyds, the British Employers' Confederation, and the Trades Union Congress — have assisted me very readily on points of detail; so have many private individuals, notably Mr. Allan Flanders, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations at Oxford, Mr. Hugh Clegg, Fellow of Nuffield College, and the Rev. L. O'Hea, S.J., Principal of the Catholic Workers' College, as well as many of my colleagues at the Institute of Statistics. Special thanks are due to Mr. Humphrey Cole for his help in preparing the index, and to Miss Mary Gisborne and Mr. Harry Kirkby for reading the proofs.

I am also grateful to Professor P. Sargant Florence, who commented on the manuscript at an early stage; and I am greatly indebted to Dr. F. A. Burchardt, Director of the Institute of Statistics, Professor D. G. Champernowne, and Professor G. D. H. Cole, for their invaluable help in offering stimulating criticism and constructive suggestions on very many points. I must add the obvious reminder that none of those named bears the responsibility for any inadequacies or inaccuracies in what I have written, but I should like to stress that they have their share in whatever merits this study may possess.

Oxford University Institute of Statistics — K. G. J. C. K.

April 1952.

19 SEP 1954

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION xi

PART A. THE BACKGROUND OF STRIKES

CHAPTER I THE NATURE OF STRIKES 1

Ancestry. Origins and connotations of the term 'strike'. Changing attitudes to strikes. The right to strike. Strategy of strikes. Tactical forms of strikes. By-forms of industrial warfare.

CHAPTER II GENERAL INFLUENCES ON INDUSTRIAL MILITANCY 20

Section 1: *Developments in Trade Unionism* 20

Changed composition of the Unions. Control of strikes and strike funds. Development of competing functions. Growth of 'officialdom'. Unofficial strikes. 'Alternative leadership'. Breakaway Unions. The drive for the 'closed shop' as an answer to breakaway Unionism. Outside influences within the Unions.

Section 2: *Development of Employers' Organizations* 61

Section 3: *Developments in employer-worker relations* 65

Strikes and the development of negotiating machinery. Conciliation and arbitration. Negotiation through Standing Joint Bodies. Mutual change of attitude of employers' and workers' organizations. Special case of the Co-operative Societies. Top-level employer-worker collaboration after the General Strike. Low-level collaboration: joint consultation. Employers' substitutes for Trade Unionism: Company Unionism; profit-sharing schemes.

Section 4: *Changing role of the State in industry* 90

The State as provider of benefits. The State as regulator of wages. The State as employer. The Government and the Unions.

CHAPTER III CONTROL OF STRIKES 99

Section 1: *Legal restrictions in practice* 99

The contract of employment. Restraints on workers in particular industries and services. Restraints to meet particular circumstances: the 'Triple Alliance' and the Emergency Powers Act; the General Strike and the Trade Disputes Act; prohibition of strikes in wartime; further restrictions.

Section 2: *Other provisions* 120

Strike ballots. Mutual indemnification by employers. Blacklisting. Spies and agents provocateurs. Organized strike-breaking. Transport strikes — a special case. Use of armed forces in strikes. Strike-breaking by Trade Unions. Other forms of pressure on strikers.

PART B. CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF STRIKES

CHAPTER IV CONDITIONS AND CAUSES OF STRIKE ACTIVITY 143

Section 1: *General economic and non-economic influences* 143

Strikes and the trade cycle: interpretation of different series of strike statistics; interpretation of different series of economic statistics. Strikes and Trade Union membership. Momentum of strike movements. Interplay of influences. Seasonality of strikes.

Appendix: Strikes and unemployment statistics.

Section 2: *Special conditions in the different groups of industries* 161

Mining and quarrying; textiles; metal trades (shipbuilding, iron and steel, engineering); transport (docks, railways, road transport); building; clothing. Women in strikes.

Appendices: Methods of constructing tables. Industrial mobility.

Section 3: *Regional influences* 185

South Wales and North-East England — a contrast. Analysis of regional influences: available data. Regional 'strike-proneness'. Industrial 'strike-proneness'. Regional and industrial influences distinguished and compared.

Section 4: *Underlying causes of strikes* 209

Strikes as a measure of industrial unrest. Character of underlying causes: bad social conditions; fatigue and frustration in industrial work; inferiority of worker's position; wage questions. Qualifying factors.

Appendices: 'Interchangeability' of strikes and absenteeism as expressions of unrest. Objectives of wage strikes: real wages or money wages?

Section 5: *Immediate causes of strikes* 228

Multiplicity of immediate causes. Strikes on questions of wages and hours. Changing importance of main causes attributed: 'basic' causes; 'frictional' causes; 'solidarity' causes. Qualifying factors.

Appendix: Industrial incidence of strike causes.

CHAPTER V CONSEQUENCES OF STRIKES 240

Section 1: *Immediate results* 240

Interpretation of the statistics. Some possible influences on the results of strikes: unemployment; Trade Union organization and policy; character of strikes (length, size and frequency). A theoretical approach to strike results. Difficulties: the element of bluff; the changed character of strikes.

Appendices: Results of strikes in relation to their length, size and frequency. Further analysis. Other factors relevant to strike results (causes, methods of settlement, industrial distribution).

Section 2: *Economic effects* 262
Effects on those directly concerned. Effects on the economy in general. General influence of strikes on wages. Effects of strikes on output: 'normal' loss of working time through strikes, relative to total working time, to previous losses of working time in comparable periods, and to working time lost through other causes; 'abnormal' loss of working time through strikes; compensating factors.
Appendices: Losses from strikes and absenteeism compared. Expenses incidental to strikes: insurance; expenditure on strike-prevention and strike-breaking.

Section 3: *Social and political effects* 286
Effects on people's habits. Strikes and crime. Political effects; strikes and public opinion.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Character of strike statistics 299
Limitations of the data. Ambiguities of classification.
Tables 306

INDEX 323

SEP 1954
MADRAS

LIST OF GRAPHS

No.		Page
1	Trade Union expenditure on various objects	26
2	Trade Union members and expenditure on administration	27
3	Days lost in strikes and Trade Union strike pay	27
4	Strikes, workers involved, and working days lost	145
5	Strikes, prices, and wages	147
6	Strikes and unemployment (*all industries*)	148
7	Strikes and unemployment (different industries)	149
8	Strikes and Trade Union membership	150
9	Strikes in different industries	151
10	'Composition' of the strike movement	153
11	'Components' of the strike movement	154
12	Magnitude and duration of strikes over different periods	155
13	Duration of strikes	156
14	Seasonal frequency of strikes	158
15	Seasonal frequency of strikes in the two wars	159
—	Major strikes in different regions (*map*)	196
16	Workers receiving, and striking for, wage increases	232
17	Relative success in strikes	244
18	Strikes of different lengths, according to results	257

29 SEP 1954

INTRODUCTION

THE striker is unloved, unhonoured, and unsung; above all, he is largely unstudied. One of the purposes of the present work is to draw attention to the tenuity of solid and systematic data, in the hope that the position may be thought worth correcting; a more positive purpose has been to put strikes in their wider economic and social setting, and thus to clear the air of narrow and oversimplified preconceptions. In the U.S.A., some careful studies of strike movements, covering considerable periods, have been made, but no such surveys have been attempted in this country. For this reason it seemed advisable to begin by taking a certain historical sweep, and to trace back to their origins various features of the conduct and control of strikes which have become marked in recent times. The first part of the study is thus mainly descriptive.

The second part, which deals with the causes and effects of strikes, is analytic in character, and is based on an examination of British strike statistics. The historical field chosen here is somewhat narrower, but covers the better part of forty years — the two world wars, their periods of incubation and aftermath, and the 'twenty years' crisis', as E. H. Carr has called it, which separated them.

During this thirty-seven year period from 1911 to 1947, the character of strikes has perceptibly changed. True, they are still mostly spontaneous, in that they do not take place in fulfilment of some conscious economic or political grand strategy; but their immediate causes, as well as their organization and conduct, have altered in conformity with a changing atmosphere. The abrupt economic and social changes of the period — changes from peace to war and back again, and from mass unemployment and insecurity to fuller employment, have clearly had their effect on strikes. So has the strong development of organization on both sides of industry, and the widening field of contact between employers and workers. An attempt is made to assess these effects.

Tightening Trade Union discipline has tended to restrict the size and length of strikes. (How far the official reluctance of the Unions to support strikes may have weakened the effectiveness of the *threat* of strikes, is a debatable point.) But this restriction of the scale of strikes has been achieved at the cost, so far, of a greater number of separate outbreaks. The wider scope of agreements, with their inevitable anomalies, has probably helped to increase the number of strikes occurring as well as having affected their formal causes. Unofficial strikes (occasionally 'strikes against the Union') have become more frequent.

Such strikes, however, are often no more than demonstrations in force. The organizational and political strength of the Trade Unions in a period of full employment which began as long ago as 1940 has already to some extent made the old-fashioned 'fight-to-a-finish' seem obsolete. Rank-and-file attitudes have inevitably been affected, not only by the reluctance of the Unions to sponsor strikes on questions other than recognition, but — naturally enough — by the prevailing atmosphere of economic and political urgency. It may be that a recrudescence of old-style struggles for mastery could be expected only against a background of insecurity associated with the recurrence of large-scale unemployment.

Only under such conditions (or possibly in the chaos of a further war) does it seem likely that strikes could be fomented to a really significant extent by 'disruptive elements'; one cannot agitate successfully without widespread grievances. But if strikes are hard to foment 'artificially', they are equally hard to suppress. The legal prohibition of strikes is, indeed, a notorious failure; it is a confession of disciplinary impotence, and in practice amounts to little more than fixing the war guilt on the worker: *quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.* Strikes, wrote C. W. Doten in 1921,[1] are merely symptoms of more fundamental maladjustments, injustices, and economic disturbances: 'treating symptoms rarely reaches the roots of the disease. Suppressing strikes will not cure social unrest; but will probably increase it. Strikes are always regrettable; but not always reprehensible. Until the social millennium is attained, they will continue to occur and will sometimes be necessary both as a direct defense against injustice and oppression and as the only way of compelling the public to give its attention to hidden evils in industrial relations.'

Of course, a strikeless society is a Utopian aim, at least in a democratic country. But in the literature of industrial relations, Utopian hopes tend to be pinned to panaceas: new incentives, material and non-material; the elaboration of joint negotiating machinery, or the extension of joint consultation; improved factory amenities; profit-sharing; and so on. Certainly some of these have produced results where they have been introduced, although their effectiveness depends on a very wide range of conditions. But industrial unrest may be generated by the worker's reaction not only to his conditions of work but also to the social order in general; and to this extent industrial psychologists, welfare supervisors and personnel managers are inevitably working in a limited field. But although management policy, however enlightened, can scarcely offset a sense of social insecurity or frustration, this should not lead one to belittle the efforts that can usefully be made.

It must be remembered, of course, that strikes are only one manifestation of industrial unrest. A diminution in the severity of strikes may, in itself, be a poor measure of the success of industrial peacemaking. In industry, as not in politics, a cold war may sometimes be more damaging than a hot one. Even if men could be successfully inhibited from taking strike action, but lost confidence in their Trade Unions, and resorted to ca' canny and absenteeism on a big scale, the price would be greater than the benefit bought.

In so far as the root causes of strikes lie outside the sphere of Union and management control, detailed proposals or changes will have a limited effect. Strikes are no more likely than other forms of warfare to be wholly obviated by the streamlining of diplomatic procedure, by rigid and partial definitions of aggression, by the threat of sanctions or counter-warfare, or even by appeals to higher loyalties. Yet some of these methods have certainly reduced the severity of strikes in our lifetime; and because the economic stringency of the post-war years has been held to require an even more complete 'avoidance of disputes', it is natural that they should continue to receive attention. Yet a strike must still, no less than in the past, be regarded as an exercise of social freedom, and a too ready appeal to economic necessity or political expediency in order to limit social freedom may produce greater economic (and political) evils than strikes.

[1] *Waste in Industry* (Washington, 1921), p. 314.

To this extent, strikes as we know them may be 'justified' at present. Clearly much still remains to be done along stock lines — fuller and franker joint consultation; closer touch between Union officials and membership; above all, obviation of the delays involved (sometimes by design) in the procedures to which the Unions are committed; and so on. One may hope that, in addition, the broader social and economic changes which are taking place may touch the remoter causes of strikes.

* * *

A word must be said concerning the study of the problem. A study of strikes overlaps into the fields of economics and sociology (not to speak of politics, psychology and the rest). In these fields, statistical evidence can seldom yet be used except descriptively or illustratively; usually there is little hope of 'proving' anything in the scientific sense. Von Neumann[1] has observed that 'part of the feeling of dissatisfaction with economic theory derives largely from the fact that frequently one is offered not proofs but mere assertions which are really no better than the same assertions given in literary form. Very frequently the proofs are lacking because a mathematical treatment has been attempted of fields which are so vast and so complicated that for a long time to come — until much more empirical knowledge is acquired — there is hardly any reason at all to expect progress *more mathematico*'. In a study of strikes, controlled experiments are impossible; and even if the data were wholly reliable, there are many statistical obstacles in the way of using them except descriptively.[2]

Statistical description has, however, an essential place in the systematizing of empirical knowledge; and the available evidence has therefore been pressed hard in the second part of the study. It is *because* the statistics of strikes have been, up to the present, subject to many limitations that it seemed important to glean what might be gleaned from them, and where the evidence was negative or inconclusive, to say so. (The more technical discussion has, to spare the general reader, been relegated to appendices where possible.) Even granted however that strike statistics cannot be wholly satisfactory, their usefulness might be further enhanced.[3]

Above all, field work is needed. The Reports of the Courts of Inquiry under the 1919 Industrial Courts Act are most informative about the causes of certain big strikes as presented by the responsible officials of both sides; but argument before a court involves some selection of issues and rationalization of motives. Rank-and-file attitudes and opinions — surely one of the most important aspects of strikes and one about which least is known — can be gauged only by people on the spot more or less at the time. Although more interest has been shown recently in strikers' attitudes, study is still restricted in scope,[4] and

[1] Von Neumann and Morgenstern, *The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* (Princeton, 1947), p. 6.

[2] To take an obvious example, ordinary tests of significance for the correlation between two series cannot properly be applied to economic time series, since these tests assume that successive values are independent of each other, and this is usually untrue.

[3] Some suggestions are made on pp. 305-6.

[4] The work of the Tavistock Institute, for example, is of necessity confined to 'good' firms (i.e. those whose managers and workers invite and welcome its collaboration, and where the disputes which arise are therefore more likely, *ex hypothesi*, to be capable of amicable settlement). Yet the nationalized industries, at least, should provide a field where a systematic study of disputes could be made. In general, Development Councils and analogous bodies might possibly be given some powers of investigation.

the main source of information lies in newspaper reports, which are inevitably summary.

As will be seen, very small or very short stoppages — the 'frontier incidents' of industrial life — do not figure in strike statistics. Yet lightning stoppages are clearly very numerous, and a knowledge of the incidence and background of these would be of importance to the study of industrial relations generally. A sample inquiry based on 'representative firms' in the different industries would undoubtedly be useful.

The whole subject of strikes has, in fact, received less attention than it deserves. Although from an economic point of view the losses directly involved in strikes over recent years have generally been small compared with the production 'lost' through other causes, the study of strikes is obviously an integral part of the study of industrial morale and therefore of the productive effort of particular groups of workers. It should hardly be necessary to plead for full attention to be given to every aspect of such a subject, or to apologize for making a preliminary attempt to clear the ground.

PART A: THE BACKGROUND OF STRIKES

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1 SEP 1954 MADRAS

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF STRIKES

'The country's safety, freedom and prosperity are threatened by a few thousand dictators who claim to speak for all labour, and who are a mixed lot of intellectuals, politicians, shop stewards and Communists. These dictators have skimmed off, for a privileged class, the whole of the cream from the supply of the milk of human kindness, generated during the war for the intended use of *heroes*.'

The Coal Strike: What is Behind IT (1921), No. 22 of a series of pamphlets, distributed from house to house in Stockton-on-Tees.

'Trade unionism has enabled skilled artisans, and even many classes of unskilled workers, to enter into negotiations with their employers with the same gravity, self-restraint, dignity and forethought as are observed in the diplomacy of great nations . . . At last, if the stake at issue is large enough, and neither side will give way, the issue is relegated by a strike or a lock-out to the decision of force. But even then the good services of several generations of organized trade unions are seen in the conduct of the contest; which generally differs in method from the contest waged between employers and employed a century ago, very much as honourable war between modern civilized peoples does from fierce guerilla war among wild peoples. Self-control and moderation of manner overlying resolute purpose distinguish the British delegates above all others at an international labour conference.'

Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (1920 edn.), pp. 703-4.

Ancestry

STRIKES in the broad sense — collective stoppages of work undertaken in order to bring pressure to bear on those who depend on the sale or use of the products of that work — are almost as old as work itself. In British experience alone there have been strikes of music hall artistes, civil servants, scavengers and dustmen, nurses, telephonists, Tower-Bridge-raisers-and-lowerers, bank officials, choirboys, insurance agents, schoolboys, cigar-makers, waiters, cooks, firemen, undertakers, policemen, Oxford students, cricket-bat makers, fishermen, umbrella-makers, film technicians, soldiers, sailors, and R.A.F. ground staff (strikes in battledress are not always classed as mutinies), schoolteachers and, of course, factory and mineworkers of all types; and those who have threatened to strike include, in addition, such diverse professional groups as doctors and footballers. In other countries, professors, public executioners, stable boys and even geisha girls have taken strike action.

Writers have often entertained their readers by tracing the ancestry of the strike back through history to the realms of the aetiological myth. The strikes of English journeymen shoemakers and weavers in the fourteenth century; the Peasants' Revolt; the 'strike' of priests carrying out the Papal Interdict in King

John's reign; a dispute of the builders of Hastings Castle with William the Conqueror — these and many other instances have been described, and paralleled in the experience of other countries. Nor is the lineage wholly lost in the reaches of classical and pre-classical antiquity: revolts of slaves and gladiators in Roman times, a strike of the builders of the Temple and Palace at Jerusalem in 29 B.C., the rebellion of Greek silver miners at Laurium in 413 B.C.,[1] the secession of the Roman plebs in 494 B.C., the stoppage of the Hebrew brickmakers[2] in 1490 (?) B.C., the strike of the builders of the great pyramid of Cheops many hundreds of years earlier — such are only a few of the events which have been cited in order to establish beyond cavil the venerable ancestry of the strike.[3] Yet strikes have changed in character so much in this country alone during the past forty years that there is little further relevance in referring to world history over forty centuries.

Origins and connotation of the term 'strike'

The term 'strike' is not two hundred years old. Up to 1922 — the year of the Washington Naval Treaty which confirmed our decline as the first sea power — we were a 'navalist' nation in something of the sense in which Germany was a militarist one. Sea water flowed in our veins, our speech was salted with nautical metaphors and similes: we knew the ropes, we quickly took our bearings, we got under way, we were seldom taken aback; things went swimmingly with us; if we found ourselves in deep water we tacked, veered or trimmed until all was plane sailing again; we worked like galley slaves, and if we chose to stop work we struck work as one might strike a mast or a sail.

This is the sense in which the first recorded use of the phrase 'to strike work' occurred in 1768, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.[4] The verb and noun gradually displaced the commoner term 'turn-out'.[5] (By the middle of the nineteenth century, 'turn-out' had apparently acquired a restricted meaning; the rules of the Friendly Society of Operative Carpenters defined a 'turn-out' to mean a 'partial strike in a shop'.[6]) The Report of the 1867 Royal Commission on Trade Unions referred to workers having been 'fined for going to work in a shop that had been struck';[7] but it was some time before the more sensational connotations of the word 'strike' began to cloud the clarity of its metaphorical origins. In 1891 the phrase 'striking a firm' appeared; by 1910 the word 'strike' was suggesting to a writer 'the blacksmith's hammer, the woodman's axe, the patriot's sword';[8] and the word maintained its violent

[1] THUCYDIDES, *Peloponnesian War*, VII, 27. [2] Exodus v.

[3] See, for example: DAVIDSON, *The Annals of Toil* (1899); WATT, *The Morality of the Strike* (New York, 1921); ESCOFFIER, *Les Grèves et l'Arbitrage* (Douai, 1904); RAYNES, *Coal and Its Conflicts* (1928); PATERSON, *The Weapon of the Strike* (1922); etc.

[4] *Annual Register*, 107 (May 9th, 1768). Later, the variant 'to strike off work' was used (*Home Office Papers*, 1819, quoted by ASPINALL, *The Early English Trade Unions* (1949), p. 329).

[5] HALÉVY, *A History of the English People in* 1815, Book II (*Economic Life*), Penguin edn., p. 186n.: 'In 1797 Eden . . . found it necessary to explain the term [strike] to his readers . . . We find the word still written in italics in a cutting from a newspaper of November 1810, which is to be found in F. Place's papers.' The local variant 'to stick' was used in Northumberland and Durham.

[6] *Royal Commision on Trade Unions, etc., Appendix to Eleventh and Final Report* (1869), p. 228.

[7] *Third Report* (1867), p. 27.

[8] CROSBY, *Strikes: When to Strike—How to Strike* (1910).

associations throughout the Syndicalist era of great strikes which ended in 1926. 1926 did indeed mark the end of an era, an era which ended 'not with a bang but a whimper'. The very term 'strike' has been dissolving in a solution of official euphemism ever since; a spade is a mere Garden Implement, starvation is Malnutrition, and a strike is an Unofficial Stoppage.

The word 'strike' was originally used of both forms of industrial dispute which involve a collective stoppage of work. 'Thieves! Fire! Murder!' ran a handbill reproduced in the Royal Commission's Report.[1] 'Caution to the ironworkers of England, Scotland, and Wales. Strike of the ironmasters of the Mersey Works, Liverpool, commonly termed a lock-out, against their workmen that are united in the bonds of Union.' Although the expression 'turn off' is found early, 'lock-out', strangely enough, is not recorded by the Oxford English Dictionary as having been used before 1860. The word 'strike' has, however, been used metaphorically to describe the wilful stoppage of many kinds of activity: we talk of hunger strikes, rent strikes,[2] rates strikes, debt strikes, strikes of capital, buyers' strikes, farmers' strikes, students' strikes, and even a mothers' strike.[3] Governmental 'strikes' are of course not unknown; George Lansbury's *Labour Weekly* alleged that in 1926 Messrs. Churchill, Joynson-Hicks, Cunliffe Lister, Cave, Bridgeman, Amery and Chamberlain threatened to resign from the Government if Mr. Baldwin declined to call the Trade Unions' bluff.

Properly speaking, however, the strike must involve a group of employed workers; 'that is, there must be a definite employer-employee relationship between the parties involved in the dispute'.[4] For statistical purposes, of course, the term must be still more narrowly defined, so as to exclude those by-forms of the strike (sabotage, ca' canny and the like) which cannot easily be measured. Moreover, official definitions usually exclude political strikes and are restricted to disputes concerning the terms or conditions of employment. Thus, to quote one of the few definitions of the strike on the Statute Book, that of the 1915 Munitions of War Act,

> 'the expression "strike" means the cessation of work by a body of persons employed acting in combination, or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding, of any number of persons employed to continue to work for an employer in consequence of a dispute, done as a means of compelling their employer, or any person or body of persons employed (or to aid other workmen in compelling their employer or any person or body of persons employed) to accept or not to accept terms or conditions of or affecting employment.'

This general definition was, however, widened during the period of operation of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act.[5]

[1] *Appendix to Eleventh Report* (1869), p. 115.

[2] Larkin tried to combine a rent strike with the Dublin strike of 1913 (*Dublin Disturbances Commission, Evidence. Cmd.* 7272 (1914), p. 4). The famous rent strikes of 1915 are noted on p. 183. Rent strikes were also threatened during the great industrial struggles of 1926; and further rent strikes developed shortly before the second world war. The most famous attempt at a rates strike was perhaps that of the Nonconformists after the 1902 Education Act.

[3] J. B. S. Haldane's phrase; in Titmuss's words, the Parents' Revolt.

[4] Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States*, 1880-1936; *Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin*, No. 651, p. 5.

[5] See pp. 114-5.

Changing attitudes to strikes

Naturally, strikes bear very different characters at different times, and popular attitudes to strikes — attitudes, that is, shared by many of the workers themselves — change also. In the first part of the nineteenth century, strikes, as a blind revolt against *laisser-faire*, were conspiracies against the laws of God as well as of man. 'You are resisting', wrote the Reverend John Burdon, a member of a royalty-owning family, to the Durham miners on strike in 1844, 'not the oppression of your employers but the Will of your Maker — the ordinance of that God Who has said that in the sweat of his face shall man eat bread, and Who has attached this penalty to the refusal to labour, namely, that if a man do not work neither shall he eat.'[1]

Mid-century economic prosperity, and the establishment of stronger Trade Unions, was reflected in the policy of the New Model Unionism and modified the popular attitude to strikes. The impact of the Great Depression and the growth of Socialist propaganda bodies developed a greater degree of self-consciousness in strikers and aroused considerable public sympathy on their behalf, while the political implications of workers' militancy were largely unrecognized. But from the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, when events had forced the Trade Unions decisively into parliamentary politics, Syndicalist agitation gave the strike movement a political colour. In the world at large, Britain was beginning to face an economic showdown; at home, 'the supply of good-tempered, cheap labour — upon which the fabric of our contemporary ease and comfort is erected — is giving out. The worker is beginning now to strike for unprecedented ends — against the system, against the fundamental conditions of labour, to strike for no defined ends at all, perplexingly and disconcertingly. The old-fashioned strike was a method of bargaining, clumsy and violent perhaps, but bargaining still; the new-fashioned strike is far less of a haggle, far more of a display of temper.'[2] So wrote H. G. Wells in 1913.

The outbreak of war merely checked the unrest; the armistice released it; inflation, Russian intervention and slump inflamed it. In the words of a body of Trade Union representatives in 1919, the fundamental causes of labour unrest were to be found rather in the growing determination of labour to challenge the whole existing structure of capitalist industry than in any of the more special and smaller grievances which came to the surface at any particular time.[3] Revolution in Europe developed the self-consciousness, or class-consciousness, of both sides; but it incidentally deepened the split between left and right in the Trade Union movement, which appeared very clearly by 1926. Indeed, the disillusion and apathy which followed the General Strike brought about new attitudes, not only to general strikes but to all strikes. This change cannot be attributed wholly to the onset of a Greater Depression and a Greater War, or to the elaboration of strike-preventing machinery and to post-war full employment. Strikes today are very different from what they were twenty-five years ago. Yesterday they were battles; today, few of them are more than protest demonstrations.

[1] Quoted in Webb, *The Story of the Durham Miners* (1921), pp. 46-7.

[2] *The Labour Unrest* (reprinted from the *Daily Mail*, 1913).

[3] *Memorandum on the Causes of and Remedies for Labour Unrest*, presented by the Trade Union representatives on the Joint Committee appointed at the National Industrial Conference, February 27th, 1919.

The right to strike

Nevertheless, the formal right to strike, legally admitted in 1824, is still jealously guarded. Strikes, despite all efforts to reduce them to the level of diplomatic relations, remain a form of warfare. No sane person would glorify warfare as such; though most would admit that the risk of war is sometimes worth taking, and even that ethics, as well as expediency, is involved — that it may in fact be 'right' to make war rather than to endure a 'shameful peace'. Few protagonists of industrial peace have assumed until recently that all clashes of interest can be resolved and all conflicts composed by mere procedure. But it is often claimed that the frequency and scale of strikes can be reduced without the formal 'right' to strike being affected.

The right to strike is, of course, part of the wider right of workers to have a share in determining the conditions of their work. In the words of the 1944 Industrial Relations Handbook, 'the right to strike is bound up with the conception of employment as a civil contract between equals'. More precisely, this right has been insisted on, and won, as the main weapon of the worker to redress the balance of *inequality* implicit in his relationship with the employer. As Professor Cole has argued,

> 'employers and workmen may be, in the eyes of the law, equal parties to a civil contract, but they are never equal parties in fact. The workman, under contract, is bound to serve his employer; the employer is entitled to order the workman about. The relation between them is thus essentially unequal. The workman can do nothing to change the terms of employment without the employer's consent: the employer who wishes to change them needs only to give an order, which the workman is expected to obey. The employer, therefore, never needs to break his contract by locking out his workmen without notice. He issues an order, and they have either to obey it or go on strike in breach of contract, and thus put themselves legally in the wrong. It is easy for employers to talk about the "sanctity" of the contracts, because they are seldom under any inducement to break them. But the workmen have sometimes to choose between breaking their contracts and breaking faith with their fellow-workers, in such a way as to allow the employer to worsen the conditions of employment. Under such conditions, workmen cannot be expected to keep their contracts: indeed, they would be wrong to do so, if it is in their power to resist.'[1]

Indeed, ethics apart, the strike has been far more 'necessary' for the worker than the lockout for the employer: employers are usually in a strong enough position not to need to resort to a lockout.[2] Thus any restriction applying indifferently to strikes and lockouts does, in effect, differentiate against the worker. Although the prohibition of lockouts would have very little effect on strikes, if strikes could be prevented there would be little need to insist on the right to lock out. Most lockouts are, in fact, reactions to strikes or to the threat of strikes.

[1] *British Trade Unionism To-day* (1939), pp. 86-7.

[2] Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States*, 1880-1936 (*Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin*, No. 651), p. 4. The author pointed out that no more than 1 or 2 per cent of all recent disputes in the U.S.A. could be called lockouts, although the proportion had been higher in earlier years. Much the same is true of this country; see p. 300.

More generally, a strike may be regarded as the exercise by workers of the freedom to choose their work.[1] But the corresponding 'freedom' of the employer to employ whom he will is — except in wartime — easier to exercise. While each party has some control over the other, in practice the employer's control is more effective, since the worker's need for money is usually greater than the employer's need for the services of a particular individual.[2] Clearly a stoppage of work, if it amounts to more than a lightning strike, will impose more immediate hardship on the worker, who has few reserves to fall back on, than on the employer.[3] The hardships suffered by workers in industrial struggles have, in the past, been too great to ignore; and even now, when the character of the strike seems to have materially altered, it is seldom a wholly frivolous act however trivial its immediate cause may appear.

Strategy of strikes

This is not to say that strikes are often carefully planned and premeditated; still less often are they dictated by considerations of strategy. Most often they are more or less spontaneous outbreaks against 'injustice'. There have, of course, been attempts at formulating a strategy of strikes; Professor Hiller[4] has quoted a labour strategist as saying that while 'inexperienced workers may strike because they consider their cause is just, that itself is no reason to strike at all'. Non-Union labour, wrote another American authority,[5] does not use the same judgment as does Union labour in timing its strikes to conform with favourable business conditions. (Strikes do, of course, respond to some extent to the movement of the trade cycle.) True, in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Unions were said to be most alert to considerations of strategy (or, to use an eloquent Syndicalist term, 'grèviculture'): 'le syndicat surveille la grève avec un soin jaloux, il l'organise, la dirige, l'interdit ou la déconseille, si elle est inopportune, il la commande, l'impose, si elle lui semble nécessaire.' This writer[6] quotes the Webbs to the effect that in Britain also Trade Unionists observed the state of the market, the employer's profit level, the international position of their industry and everything which could affect profits — and that only after a study of all these did they decide whether or not to strike. Yet the British Labour Movement is not enamoured of theory, and has been slow to develop any general strategy either in industry or in politics; recently, since Trade Union policy has so largely eschewed strikes, one could hardly have expected to find a coherent strategy being followed. At any rate, 'a labour

[1] See Burns, *Wages and the State* (1926), p. 173.
[2] See Warner and Low, *The Social System of the Modern Factory; The Strike: A Social Analysis* (Yale, 1947), p. 69.
[3] Even this axiom of Marshall's has, however, been denied. 'Economists write as if a total or partial stoppage of work meant to an employer only a little less profit at the end of a year, while to the workman it is a question of life or death for himself and his family . . . If not the employer's life, his business life is at stake, and there is not in human experience a keener anguish to a sensitive and honourable man than the fear of impending bankruptcy; grief for the loss of nearest and dearest friends, or the fear of death itself, is not more poignant.' (T. S. Cree, *A Criticism of the Theory of Trades' Unions*, 1891.) But granting that a strike might, in a more competitive era, have given a small employer cause for alarm, a coarser age takes a more robust view.
[4] *The Strike* (Chicago, 1928), p. 272.
[5] Doten, *Waste in Industry* (1921), p. 305.
[6] Escoffier, *Les Grèves et l'Arbitrage* (Douai, 1904), p. 202.

Clausewitz, able to treat this subject and analyse in sufficient detail the strategic and tactical conditions of successful striking, if with us, is still unpublished';[1] the promise of the miners' Unofficial Reform Committee of 1912, in the famous pamphlet *The Miners' Next Step*, to publish a further pamphlet 'which will deal in a comprehensive and orderly way, with different methods and ways of striking' remained unfulfilled. This is not altogether surprising.

Although strikes are often economic in origin, their effects reach far beyond the economic field; and the non-economic or indirectly-economic effects of strikes are even more difficult to forecast or assess than their economic effects. The inherent limitations of a purely economic strategy of strikes were noted by Marshall:[2] 'There is of course', he wrote, 'no advantage in comparing the expense of any particular strike with the total direct gain to wages of any that follow after it: partly because the events that follow the strike may have been due to other causes, and partly because a strike is a mere incident in a campaign, and the policy of keeping up an army and entering on a campaign has to be judged as a whole. The gain of any particular battle is not to be measured by the booty got in it; and even defeat is no proof that the General was wrong in not submitting without a battle.'

Communists, of course, and to some extent Syndicalists also, have conceived of a strike strategy determined by their general revolutionary aims. Lenin was a bitter critic of 'economism', or the pursuit of economic ends without reference to politics. 'Every strike', held the I.W.W.[3] 'is a small revolution and a dress rehearsal for the big one.' An overall strategy of mass action, maintained the Communist International in its Programme of 1928, should include 'strikes; a combination of strikes and demonstrations; a combination of strikes and armed demonstrations and finally, the general strike conjointly with armed insurrection against the State power of the bourgeoisie'.

Indeed the idea of a revolutionary general strike has recurred throughout history with persistence and spontaneity. 'L'idée de la grève générale', wrote Pouget,[4] 'n'a pas de blason idéologique; elle vient du peuple et ne peut prétendre à une noble origine. Ni sociologues, ni philosophes n'ont daigné élucubrer sur son compte, analyser ses formules, doser sa théorie.' Every convert to the cause, said Bernard Shaw,[5] has, in the first five minutes of his novitiate, a splendid and dazzling idea: 'Why not bring capitalism to its knees at one stroke by a general

[1] BAROU, *British Trade Unions* (1947), p. 103.

[2] *Economics of Industry* (1919), p. 379n.

[3] *Labour Defender* (December 15th, 1918).

[4] Quoted by LAGARDELLE, *La Grève Générale et le Socialisme, Enquête Internationale, Opinions et Documents* (Paris, 1905), p. 37. (*See also* ROLLER, *The Social General Strike*, and a pamphlet of the same name written by Mr. Jack Tanner in 1919.) On the Continent, a general strike had been proposed by Girardin in 1851, and the idea had had support in the International Working Men's Association during the following decade, particularly from Bakunin and the Anarchists. After the collapse of the I.W.M.A. the idea was re-imported into France from the United States (after the hanging of the Chicago Anarchists following the Haymarket Riots of 1886) and was taken over by the Syndicalists. In Britain, the idea of a general strike recurred in the early nineteenth century; the Glasgow strikers of 1820, Benbow (the 'Grand National Holiday'), Doherty and Owen (both the National Regeneration Society and the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union proposed to secure the eight-hour day by a general strike if necessary), and finally the Chartists (the 'Sacred Month') all favoured it. It was popularized again early in the present century under Syndicalist influence.

[5] In *Labour Research* (June 1st, 1920), p. 82.

strike?' 'But,' he added, 'the older hand may retort by asking why not commit suicide?'

In British experience, no doubt because of the relative prosperity of the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of a revolutionary general strike was for a long time buried with Benbow and the Chartists. When an international general strike of miners for the eight-hour day[1] was proposed in the 'nineties 'the British delegates were not at all enthusiastic for an universal strike, while the Germans, French and Belgians pressed for it strongly, urging that the date for its commencement should be fixed'.[2] Perhaps the best recent example of a general strike in these islands was the Irish general strike of 1913, led by Larkin and Connolly. Political consciousness was not lacking: 'If', said Larkin, 'Sir Edward Carson is right in telling the men of Ulster to form a Provisional Government in Ulster, I think I must be right, too, in telling you to form a Provisional Government in Dublin.'[3] The strike, which began as a sympathetic movement in connexion with the handling of goods of firms that were 'in dispute' with their workers, was remarkable because it involved all the trades, including agriculture, of a whole city and district. Larkin, who had astonishing control over his men, showed real generalship, giving way temporarily on one front in order to call his followers out again at a moment's notice where they were needed. He had strong support from the rank and file of the British Unions, and the T.U.C. was forced to support him. The C.W.S. sent food to Dublin for the starving children of the strikers; and the strike was so like a war that children had to be evacuated from the danger areas.[4]

Syndicalist enthusiasm for the general strike was only temporarily damped by the first world war. After the failure of the Triple Industrial Alliance, we find Tom Mann advocating a series of short general strikes of less than three days (preferably one-day or half-day strikes) — short enough to be conducted without strike-pay, but big enough to be paralysing.[5] But the General Strike of 1926, when it came, was not so much a revolutionary general strike as a peaceful demonstration of civil disobedience.

Revolutionary general strikes apart, even big-scale sympathetic strikes may have revolutionary implications, and have therefore been outlawed since 1926; although the formal right to call sympathetic strikes has been maintained.

[1] The eight-hour day was, it must be remembered, for a long time a demand which only revolutionaries would make. See M. I. Cole, *Makers of the Labour Movement* (1948), p. 209.

[2] *Labour Gazette* (June 1893), p. 36. The occasion was the Miners' International Congress at Brussels. (It had, however, in fact been Keir Hardie who had urged a resolution to fix the date of such a strike, at the Jolimont Congress of a few years before.)

[3] Quoted by Wright, *Disturbed Dublin, The Story of the Great Strike* (1914), p. 125. (This book gives a circumstantial – and delightfully partial – account of the background of 'Larkinism', from the employers' side.) The same argument was used by Larkin in his appeal for a Citizen Army: see also O'Cathasaigh, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* (1919), pp. 4-5. Larkin recommended all members of the Transport Union to join it.

[4] See Montefiore, *Our Fight to Save the Kiddies in Dublin* (1913); and Ryan, *The Irish Labour Movement* (1919), p. 229f.

[5] Tom Mann, *Power Through the General Strike: A Call to Action* (1923). In this oddly-produced pamphlet the author ascribes the plagues of Egypt to 'the stubbornness of the Egyptian plutocracy . . . who, after all, were not a patch on the British plutocracy . . . Let us show that we can appreciate the sensible lesson from the Bible and ourselves take pattern by it . . . it is militancy that is called for in the movement; the silly kids' game of negotiating, and arbitrating, and finnicking with Industrial Councils all operate in one way, to lower the workers' standard.'

However, even before the outbreak of 1926 it was thought necessary to apologize for sympathetic action:

> '. . . every Trade Unionist retains, and must always retain, the unchallenged right to withdraw his labour in support of a great and serious issue such as this, an issue of grave moment to the whole working class. As we have pointed out, this is not "sympathetic action" at all, it is a primary necessity of self-defence. Trade Unionists who take such action in support of the Miners are defending their own industrial interests just as much as if a reduction of their own wages had been already proposed.'[1]

In so far as no overall strategy of strikes is formulated, a 'strike movement' is merely an aggregate of unco-ordinated and sporadic strikes. (Such a 'movement' occurred in the years leading up to the second world war.) Yet even if strikes are confined to the narrowest economic objectives, there are clearly important strategic problems to be solved. For example, in industries whose regional distribution is concentrated in a single centre with some outlying 'spots', it may seem important to organize the outlying areas if only as a possible field for 'guerilla' or 'pilot' strikes before risking a frontal attack at the centre. The 'placing' of strikes, both within industries and between industries, may be as important as the timing.

The wave of strikes in the U.S.A. in the first half of 1946 may be cited as a recent example of successful placing. They resulted in the fairly general winning of a 20 per cent wage increase, which was apparently more than the Union leadership had expected. This result was due to a succession of strikes, sometimes overlapping. The strikes started in oil-refining, where labour costs are low and profits high, and where a 20 per cent increase could be won without much difficulty. They spread to the automobile industry, and here again an increase could be afforded; after the assessment by a Fact-Finding Commission of 18½ per cent, the Unions were scarcely likely to ask for less than 20 per cent. The strikes then spread to the steelworkers; and although in this industry it was claimed to be impossible to offer even a 5 per cent rise in wages and keep prices intact, the impetus of the strike wave was so strong that the Administration decided to yield — at the cost of abandoning their wartime policy of allowing wages to rise only so long as prices were kept stable. So prices rose. Congress was adamant against any further granting of subsidies, since agricultural subsidies were already so high. The strikes then spread to coal and railways, and victories were won all round — at the cost of a price-rise which greatly outpaced wages.[2]

But strike strategy on the grand scale has proved difficult to formulate; at best it is little more than a happy accident. Even at the tactical level,

[1] *The Mining Dispute: Miners' Wages Protected: A Lesson in Trade Union Unity* (T.U.C. General Council, 1925).

[2] After this, and partly also for political reasons, the grip on labour was tightened by the Taft-Hartley Act (which followed similar legislation in a number of States). Yet early in 1947 it was being maintained that the damping-down of the strike movement solved no problem in closing the gap between wages and purchasing-power, and 'may, as a matter of fact, in long-range terms produce a problem. Because on the basis of rough justice, a strike at least holds out the possibility that wage income can still remain in some even keel with prices. But labour has been chastened well, and the gap is growing and may grow larger' (LEO CHERNE, Executive Secretary to the Research Institute of America, in *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, March 6th, 1947). It is seldom that the primitive devices of the old world are called in to redress the balance of the new.

'the variety of conditions under which a strike may break out is such that there can be few generalizations as to its conduct. The economic conditions, the degree of organization on both sides, the immediate issue and the general issues behind it, the mood of the workers, the local situation, the general political position, all are, or may be, important. At any moment one of the factors may change and produce a situation in which all previous decisions must be scrapped. . . .'[1]

Tactical forms of strikes

The most familiar form of strike is that in which a number of workers wholly withdraw their labour until their demands are granted or their strength is exhausted. Within the inclusive term 'withdrawal of labour' or 'withholding of labour', however, very different tactical forms of strike have appeared from time to time. As some forms become obsolete, others take their place.

'If you are going to have strikes that will be effective,' said an opponent of the Syndicalists in debate with Tom Mann,[2] 'the little ones hurt and annoy the employer. The big ones do not . . . If the strike is going to be used it is best for little organizations to keep on striking—as soon as one lot comes back another lot goes out.' The Syndicalists themselves, while feeling that big strikes were to be aimed at, held that there was a place for 'irritation strikes', as was made clear in *The Miners' Next Step*; indeed, small-scale but disrupting strikes were a feature of Larkin's policy of preparing a general outbreak.[3] The varieties of small strike are innumerable. The 'strike in detail', a name given by the Webbs to the systematic organization of labour turnover — the successive leaving of jobs by individuals — has naturally fallen into disuse while unemployment has been high,[4] but there have been many varieties of strike that have not involved leaving one's job at all. Sit-down, stay-in, stay-down, and even lie-down strikes have been undertaken so as to make it difficult for the employer to introduce blacklegs, but also perhaps because of the specific 'notion of investment and property rights in a certain job'.[5] There have also been many different kinds of lightning, demonstration,[6] protest and token strikes.

[1] MAHON, *Trade Unionism* (1937), pp. 42-3.

[2] Frank Rose, reported in a special number of *The Industrial Syndicalist*, vol. I, No. 7, (January 1911), p. 43.

[3] Connolly held that the British experience of 1911-14 proved that the 'sporadic strike'—strongly disapproved by the Trade Union amalgamations and federations of the day—was 'the greatest weapon against capital'. (See his article 'Old Wine in New Bottles', written in 1914 and reprinted in *The Axe to the Root* in 1934, pp. 35-8.)

[4] WEBB (*Industrial Democracy* (1926 edn.), p. 169) wrote of the 'strike in detail' that while it could never become the sole method of any but a small, wealthy, and closely-knit Trade Union, it might 'surpass even an Act of Parliament itself' in effectiveness. This judgment was optimistic, in so far as the strike in detail 'does not diminish but increases the number of men in the trade, and so leaves the employer in a stronger position at the end of the dispute'. (T. S. CREE, *Evils of Collective Bargaining in Trade Unions*, 1898.)

[5] LESTER, *Economics of Labor* (New York, 1947), p. 617: 'strikers are not quitting the job but presumably are only ceasing operations pending a settlement of working terms.' Thus Michigan automobile workers announced that they were 'not sitting on the employer's property but on their jobs' (BALDWIN, *Civil Liberties and Industrial Conflict* (Harvard, 1938), pp. 36-7). The same thought evidently underlay the stay-down strike of miners at Waleswood colliery in 1948, in protest at the threatened closing-down of the pit by the Coal Board.

[6] In extreme cases the 'demonstration' is directed at the general public as well as at the employer. Strikers' processions or 'demonstrations' are of course not uncommon; but

One or two British examples must suffice. Apart from the numerous lightning strikes which take the form of sit-down strikes ('quickies', as they are called in the U.S.A.)[1] there have been some more notable strikes of this kind: the Hoe strike[2] of 1926, for example, and the stay-in strikes of L.M.S. workers at the Newton Heath wagon works, and of L.N.E. workers at Hull, in the same year. The stay-down strike of miners, a by-form of the stay-in, which was according to Marquand a 'new' method imported from France and the U.S.A. in the early 1930s, was used, despite Trade Union opposition, in the struggle to eliminate 'non-political' unionism from the coalfields. A correspondent to *The Times* (September 14th, 1936) suggested that, as a method of dealing with this 'foreign innovation', stay-in strikers should be prosecuted for trespass; in the same year in a Lanarkshire pit, the harsher method was adopted of depriving the strikers of food.

The 'token' strike is, as its name implies, merely a method of underlining a threat of serious strike action. 'I have to inform you', wrote a T. & G.W.U. district secretary to an employer in 1947,[3] 'that our members have decided to return to work. The stoppage over the week end should be made known to you as a token strike to express the very strong views they hold . . . They have decided to return to work today on the distinct understanding that you will take note that if' (the Union's request is not complied with) '. . . the position will in all probability deteriorate considerably and may have major consequences as a result.' Token strikes have naturally become common in recent years, because of the economic stringency and official Trade Union reluctance to undertake serious strikes. They are not, incidentally, confined to democratic countries: in the U.S.S.R. also, in a not-wholly-dissimilar situation under N.E.P., strikes were reported to be short demonstrations 'intended to hasten the conclusion of negotiations which show a tendency to be unduly protracted', and to be 'probably caused by antipathy to the Unions'.[4]

There have also been many instances of the 'running-sore' strike, where for example transport workers may refuse to run the last bus on the schedule over

[1] BALDWIN (op. cit., pp. 93-100) describes various kinds of sit-down strikes in current U.S.A. practice, and LEVINSON, in *Labor on the March* (New York 1938), pp. 175-9, gives tactical details.

[2] The Hoe strike of 1926, whose background was the refusal of the employers to consider a wage increase demand, was preceded by an overtime embargo and a go-slow movement; and the strike itself began as a stay-in strike, following the employment by the firm of non-Union labour in replacement of Union members who had been sacked. Thus out of a single situation developed a number of different varieties of stoppage. (The stay-in strike is of course an old method; a stay-in strike of Bordeaux gasworkers is referred to, for example, by LEWIS, *Syndicalism and the General Strike* (1912?), p. 33; and Italian workers carried on political stay-in strikes immediately after the war ended.)

[3] *News Chronicle* report (April 11th, 1947).

[4] *The Trade Union Movement in Soviet Russia, I.L.O. Studies and Reports, Series A (Industrial Relations)*, No. 26 (1927), p. 181.

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sometimes the very form of the strike may be a demonstration. Such is the hunger strike, which has not been used industrially in this country, and the Japanese 'chimney man' strike: 'one of the strikers climbs up to the top of the tallest chimney where the strike is on. The man stays at the top of the chimney through night and day, exposed to the wind, sun and rain and refuses to come down until the employer concedes the workers' demands, and the strike is over . . . It has become so popular that whenever a strike breaks out, the police immediately guard the chimney so as to prevent any man from climbing it.' (IWAO F. AYUSAWA, in *Organized Labour in Four Continents* (1939), p. 500.)

a period, perhaps of months, pending the settlement.[1] This kind of strike has often taken the form of a refusal to work overtime;[2] and here the (January 1946) disguised strike of London bus conductors on the question of the 'standing order' in buses is perhaps analogous.

The 'bumper' strike, as the Syndicalists called it, deserves a special reference, since it has attracted attention more than once. After the repeal of the Combination Acts the Barnsley linen weavers planned to call out the workers factory by factory (the order being selected by lot) — the strikers to be supported by the contributions of those still in work. This tactic, popularized by Doherty at the end of the 1820s,[3] met with great success; writers in the following decade asserted that those who followed it were generally victorious and thought themselves irresistible.[4] It is mentioned in the 1892 *Report on Strikes and Lockouts*,[5] where it is described by employers as the most 'unfair' form of strike they had ever experienced. In the present century it was rediscovered by the Syndicalists;[6] and Bernard Shaw, in a passage decrying the general strike, gave his blessing to a variant of it.[7]

In recent years a big-scale bumper strike was planned by the U.S.A. automobile workers' Union. In 1945[8] this Union began to attack the industry firm by firm, exposing each target company in turn to the competition of its rivals. The plan, however, was slow in operation, and it proved difficult to restrain workers in the rest of the industry from striking simultaneously and thereby wrecking the scheme. Again, in the British radio industry in 1946, according to the *Banker*,[9]

> 'The militants and/or Communists have evidently been studying carefully the technique of their opposite numbers in the United States. There, the militants have adopted the policy of concentrating on one firm at a time. While fighting out a grievance with the firm in question, they concert with shop stewards in other rival firms to increase production as much as possible. The object of this is to endeavour to threaten the management into giving way by the spectacle of orders going elsewhere, and deliveries at a time of great demand being effected by their rivals. It is interesting in this connec-

[1] An early example of this type of strike was undertaken by the Fifeshire Miners in 1870, as part of the struggle for the shorter working day. The miners regularly ceased work at the end of eight hours; and their eventual victory is celebrated at the annual Fife Gala. The 'Sundays only' strikes of British railway workers in 1945 and 1949, and the 'alternate days' strike of Argentine railway workers in November 1947, are variants.

[2] Such strikes may of course take place on issues having nothing to do with hours of work—e.g. the strike of A.E.U. members (Tees-side) in 1940, which was undertaken on a wage issue but took the form of an overtime embargo.

[3] See Cole, *Attempts at 'General Union'*, 1829-1834 (Leiden, 1939), *passim*. He instances a number of these bumper strikes, one as early as 1821-23.

[4] See W. H. Hutt, *The Theory of Collective Bargaining* (1930), p. 29 (this author, however, confuses bumper strikes with strikes in detail).

[5] P. 157.

[6] The tactic was recommended by Griffuehles for a strike of Paris jewellers in 1907; but they were defeated by a general lockout. (See Tridon, *The New Unionism* (New York, 1913), pp. 29-30.)

[7] *Everybody's Political What's What?* (1944), p. 305. While the general strike must always fail 'because Lazarus dies of starvation before Dives misses a meal, which serves Lazarus right for being such a fool', 'the way to make a strike successful is to confine it to one trade whilst all the others work full time, and overtime if necessary, to support it'.

[8] *The Times* (September 24th, 1945).

[9] April 1946, p. 21.

tion to note that the Cossor shop stewards urged the workers of the rival Philco firm to step up production as much as possible — ostensibly to "maintain the export drive" but actually in an endeavour to bring the Cossor company to heel.'

A similar sectional strike (although there was no apparent intention to convert it into a bumper strike) was conducted by Irish teachers in 1946: the strike was one of Dublin teachers only, and other teachers levied themselves to make up the salaries of the strikers. The strike was thus enabled to continue for months.

For such a strike tactic to succeed, however, either conditions in the industry must still be genuinely competitive, or at least there must be no possibility of getting the work done elsewhere or elsehow. Otherwise the 'correct' tactic for strikes is presumably to extend rather than to restrict them. Communists have insisted, for example, that transport strikes should be general within the area affected; otherwise 'the road transport workers could only pay a levy to help the railways' (i.e. railwaymen who are on strike) 'by drawing wages that are the result of work that is helping to defeat the railwaymen';[1] conversely, 'the present South Wales dispute, where 25,000 railwaymen, 30,000 miners, every Trades Council with the exception of Swansea, are consciously behind the men as a result of the explanatory appeals that have been issued to them, marks the nearest approach to what may be termed a correct strike strategy' (? tactic) 'for a bus fleet'.[2]

By-forms of industrial warfare

There are of course many techniques of industrial struggle other than the strike proper. Sabotage, boycotts, 'fair lists' and 'black lists', Union labels, ca' canny and other restrictive practices, have all been used at various times to bring pressure to bear on employers.

Sabotage, of which Luddite machine-breaking and violence is perhaps the most familiar example, has a long history.[3] It generally characterizes a weak Trade Union movement, where — as for example in France at the end of the nineteenth century — it is difficult to prevent the use of blacklegs or even to maintain a long strike. It appealed to the Syndicalists as the most direct form of 'direct action',[4] and they thought of it either as a substitute for, or an accompaniment of, a strike. It endeared itself to romantic imaginations:

> 'Sabotage, this dark, invincible, terrible Damocles' sword that hangs over the head of the master class, will replace all the confiscated weapons and ammunition of the army of the toilers . . . There can be no injunction against it. No policeman's club. No rifle. No prison bars. It cannot be starved into submission. It cannot be discharged. It cannot be black-

[1] *Labour Monthly* (September 1922), p. 153.

[2] *Labour Monthly* (September 1935), p. 550.

[3] Violence is incidental to sabotage, although the word sabotage has acquired violent associations. Violent sabotage is, wrote VEBLEN (*The Engineers and the Price System*, 1921, ch. 1), exceptional 'as compared with that deliberate malingering, confusion, and misdirection of work that makes up the bulk of what the expert practitioners would recognize as legitimate sabotage'. In the widest sense of the term, sabotage would include strikes, lockouts, and indeed all restrictive activities; but here the word is used more narrowly, to cover certain kinds of obstructive action by workers, other than strikes.

[4] The term 'direct action' was apparently first used by Pelloutier in 1897.

listed. It is present everywhere, like the airship that soars high above the clouds in the dead of night, beyond the reach of the cannon and the search-light, and drops the deadliest bombs into the enemy's encampment.'[1]

Syndicalists distinguished three forms of sabotage: 'active' sabotage, involving the temporary disablement of machinery or damage of goods (some writers were not so squeamish as to insist that the damage should be only temporary); 'open-mouthed' sabotage, involving the exposure of fraudulent commercial practices; and lastly obstructionism or 'passive' sabotage.

In recent times there have been few examples of 'active sabotage' in this country. It occurred in the electricians' strike at the Albert Hall in 1918 (in protest at the refusal of the hall for a Labour demonstration); the strikers removed the fuses when they left. It has occurred occasionally in mining strikes; the policy of deliberately flooding the mines was discussed regularly in South Wales disputes, but does not seem to have been carried out except in 1910.[2] In 1919 the pumpmen came out on strike and the pumps were manned by naval ratings;[3] in 1921 the pumpmen were not specifically called out. Of this strike a miner complained: 'We were continually urged to stand out and keep everybody else out, until ultimately . . . we found that nature had punished our action by flooding and drowning lots of our Mines . . . We had no one to thank for this but ourselves for not insisting that all safety men and others needed to keep the Pits in order should not only be allowed to work but should have been compelled to work'.[4] A certain amount of transport sabotage accompanied the 1919 railway strike, and also the General Strike.[5] But in all cases it was wholly unofficial,[6] and was intended not so much as an end in itself as to make the stoppages more complete.

A milder form of active sabotage was the 'irritation' or 'pearl' strike,[7] which the Syndicalists defined as remaining at work and doing everything wrong. Examples of this still occur, at least in the U.S.A.: a New York report of the *Manchester Guardian* (March 6th, 1948) stated that theatre operators and projectionists secured a new two-year contract and a 15 per cent rise in wages by an

[1] Introduction by Arturo Giovanitti to POUGET, *Le Sabotage*; see LAIDLER, *Boycotts and the Labour Struggle* (1913), pp. 340-1; also the chapter on sabotage in BROOKS, *American Syndicalism* (New York, 1913).

[2] At Maesteg and elsewhere; see EVANS, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield, 1910-11* (1911).

[3] *The Times* (July 22nd, 1919).

[4] J. W. FIDLER, *The Mining Trouble* (1921). A decision to withdraw safety workers had in fact been carried, but was reversed; see RAYNES, *Coal and Its Conflicts* (1928), p. 187, and FRANK HODGES, *My Adventures as a Labour Leader*, pp. 122, 129.

[5] GLASGOW, in *General Strikes and Road Transport* (1926), says that the 'all-important' question of protection for transport was the first question to be discussed by the authorities, and that it was decided to use single units rather than convoys wherever possible.

[6] Trade Unions have strongly disapproved. When, for instance, petrol was hosed into *The Times* office on May 5th, 1926, *The Times* compositors' chapel officially—and obviously sincerely—expressed abhorrence at the attempted arson.

[7] See WATNEY and LITTLE, *Industrial Warfare* (1912), p. 29. 'La grève perlée' is defined by *Larousse du XXme Siècle* as 'sabotage sournois qui consiste en des malfaçons de détail, des erreurs échappant à tout contrôle, et propres à compromettre petit à petit la marche d'une entreprise.' A British prescription for the irritation strike (*The Miners' Next Step* (1912), policy clause 10) amounts to little more than ca' canny: 'Lodges should as far as possible discard the old method of coming out on strike for any little minor grievance. And adopt the more scientific weapon of the irritation strike by simply remaining at work, reducing their output, and so contrive by their general conduct to make the colliery unremunerative.'

unofficial campaign which had startled audiences with films shown upside down, alarming noises from the sound machinery, mixed reels from other films, and films shown on the ceiling instead of on the screen. Probably the commonest form of sabotage is that described by Wahl;[1] 'incidentally, that's how they used to fight the speed-up. When it got over sixty say, someone would just accidentally drop a bolt in the line and as soon as it worked its way round to the end, bang, the line would stop. Then there'd be a delay and everyone would take his break.'

There is, of course, always a certain amount of wilful destruction which does not come under any of these categories, since it has no ostensible industrial purpose. *The Times*, for example, reported (September 2nd, 1943) 12 cases of 'malicious damage' in the coalfields during the first eight months of the year which it could not class as sabotage at all. Even these acts, however, were possibly blind expressions of industrial discontent.

What the Syndicalists called 'open-mouthed sabotage' has occasionally been coupled with a strike, in order to gain support from the consumer-public. William Mellor (*Direct Action*, 1920, p. 107) recommended the method as a politically-expedient form of direct action; and he also suggested, as an extension of the same principle (and a step towards Guild Socialism), a refusal by builders to build jerry-built houses.[2] The strike of 500 tramwaymen in Streatham (August 1946) in order 'to call attention to the dilapidated condition of the tramcars' is a recent example.

The industrial boycott is analogous, although the boycott is of wider application and its object is not so much to embarrass the employer by exposing 'fraudulent commercial practices' as to put him out of business by publicizing bad working conditions. It has been far commoner in the United States than here; a writer in the *Economic Journal* in 1891[3] stated that 'the usual British boycott aims only at preventing the employer from obtaining other men, or from getting his work done at other places, but we are almost entirely strangers to that form of trade interdict which aims at compelling the surrender or ruin of an obstinate employer by stopping the sale of his goods'. The writer cited attempts, not markedly successful, of London bakers and London boot- and shoemakers to boycott in the American style, but suggested that there is something about the boycott which is un-English, even in America: 'the major portion of the boycotts in New York were more the work of foreigners than of workers of English descent, who seem inclined to fight out their battles in the old-fashioned way.' Nevertheless, there have clearly been some considerable boycott movements in this country, to judge from adverse Court decisions around the end of the nineteenth century.[4]

[1] *Assembly Line* (*Modern Review*, published by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, vol. II, No. 1 (January 1948), p. 47).

[2] Cole (*The World of Labour* (1928 ed.), pp. 96-7) quoted a parallel exhortation from a French building workers' journal: 'Camarades, sabotons bien les heures du travail, en faisant de l'art dans nos métiers respectifs.' This appeal to commit sabotage against the jerry-builder by going slow and 'turning out art in our respective trades' was not open to complaints on the ground that sabotage tended to lower workers' standards.

[3] Burnett, *The Boycott as an Element in Trade Disputes*, *Economic Journal* (1891), p. 172f. Connolly (*The Axe to the Root* (1934 edn.), p. 8) asserted the success of boycotting, particularly in Sweden.

[4] See Laidler, *Boycotts and the Labour Struggle* (1913), p. 242. The issue of a 'black list' (i.e. with a view to boycott) of non-union men and non-union firms was pronounced an actionable wrong in *Trollope v. the London Building Trades Federation* (1895).

That the weapon is not forgotten is evident from one or two more recent instances. In July 1934, *Busman's Punch* (the journal of the busmen's Rank and File Movement) appealed for boycott action on behalf of clothing workers who were on strike against 'dismissals, victimization, and the introduction of cheap labour', and printed a form of letter for individuals to send to the managing director of the firm concerned:

> 'Neither I myself, nor any member of my family, will have any dealings with the Great Universal Stores, Ltd., or its associated companies, the Hackney Furnishing Co., and the Midland Furnishing Co., until all the workers are reinstated and their demands are fully conceded.'

In 1939-40 a request for a boycott received the highest official Trade Union support. On this occasion, the Leicester and Leicestershire Amalgamated Hosiery Union was at loggerheads with the manufacturers of 'Bear Brand' hosiery over questions of Trade Union recognition and the establishment of the national agreement governing the rates of fine-gauge knitters. The Union, with the backing of the T.U.C. General Council, sent a statement to the editors of Trade Union journals asking them to request members to get their relatives and friends to buy stockings made only by firms operating the national agreement.[1] An advertisement also appeared in the *Daily Herald*, stating incidentally that the Union had the support of the Hosiery Manufacturers' Association against the recalcitrant firm.

The 'fair list' of firms and the 'Union label', which may be thought of as extensions of the boycott, have again been commoner in the U.S.A. than elsewhere. They have also been used in Canada and, to a limited extent, in continental Europe. In Britain 'fair lists' have been made in the printing trade, but not apparently in other industries. The 'Union label' has been little used here; that of the Felt Hatters, however, which was already in use in the 1890s,[2] was effective enough to be forged by Canadian manufacturers before the first world war. The advertisements of the hatters' label appearing in Trade Union journals maintained an archaic flavour; an example from the A.S.E. journal in 1918 ran:

> 'Felt Hatters' and Trimmers' Unions.
>
> 'War and Trade.
>
> 'There is merit in *trying*, so
> Don't leave people dying; but
> Keep on Buying and
> Keep the flag flying.
> If home trade is healthy
> It's good for the wealthy,
> As well as being good for the workmen.
> A smart, stylish hat is a true sign of respectability,
> Keep up the nation's reputation and buy a new felt hat.
>
> 'Patronize us! It will enable us to patronize you.
>
> 'See our Union Label under the Leather.'

[1] T.U.C. *Reports* (1939), p. 89; (1940), p. 91.

[2] G. D. H. Cole informs me that he came across a reference to a hatters' label in a Stockport newspaper of the 1850s, and that the Union label was possibly in use as early as the 1830s.

The National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives started using a Union label in 1912. In that year the Trades Union Congress approved a resolution affirming that 'the time has now arrived when all workers should be called upon to give preference in making purchases to articles made by Trade Union labour', and suggesting that a uniform label should be designed by the T.U.C. itself; but the suggestion was not followed up. In 1928 the T.U.C. General Council reported to the Congress on the whole subject of fair lists and Union labels, but the report was purely historical and again no action was taken — Union labels being considered impracticable since articles were processed by an increasingly large number of firms (of varying degrees of Trade Union organization) before being sold.

Sympathetic refusals to handle 'tainted' or 'black' goods—one kind of sympathetic strike — are a commoner form of boycott. It has even been suggested, although allowance must be made for Syndicalist wishful thinking, that 'no single strike takes place without a discussion arising on the question of "tainted goods", and no big strike occurs without an attempt being made unofficially to put into operation a boycott of these goods'.[1] No doubt the rank and file have been more enamoured of the policy than the Union leadership; indeed in the early days of the N.U.R. its executive committee was so frequently embarrassed by unofficial attempts to boycott 'tainted goods' that an official warning pointed out that 'there cannot be any dispute in any industry but what in some way or another the railwaymen would be affected and, therefore, if the principle of the sympathetic strike is followed our members must also be involved'.[2]

In 1942 — to take a modern instance — the dockers of the island of Lewis, who were organized in the same Union as certain spinning operatives in the locality, refused on the instructions of their officials to handle imports of yarn which was being made into cloth so cheaply as to threaten the conditions desired by the spinners. (The dockers likewise refused to handle the exports of this cloth.) The mill-owners employing the spinners supported the Union's action; the rival producers brought a case against the Union officials individually, but lost it before the House of Lords.[3]

Refusals to handle 'black' goods have, because of their discriminatory character, sometimes been used as a political weapon. In 1919, for instance, the 'Jolly George' strike took the form of a refusal to load arms to be used by the Poles against Soviet Russian troops (parallel action was said to have been taken by Warsaw dockers); and in 1937-38 the dockers of Liverpool, Glasgow and Southampton refused to load arms for Japan against China. Similar instances can be given from other countries; sympathetic action was organized through the International Transport Workers' Federation in preventing the export of coal to Britain from France, Germany, the Low Countries and Scandinavia during the General Strike;[4] New Zealand and Australian Trade Unions refused in 1946 to load arms for use against the Indonesians, and also threatened to refuse to unload 'black goods' from the U.S.A. if President Truman used the U.S. Navy to break the maritime workers' strike.

[1] Mellor, *Direct Action* (1920), p. 85.
[2] Alcock, *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism* (1922), p. 445.
[3] The Crofter case (*Crofter Hand Woven Harris Tweed Co. v. Veitch*), 1942.
[4] An embargo on coal exports to Britain was not achieved for the duration of the coal strike of 1926, however; see p. 274, n. 1.

To the Syndicalist, passive sabotage meant 'working to rule', or the literal carrying out of orders in a way calculated to retard production and reduce the employer's profit margin; but it included many ca' canny practices. Where a mass-observance of working regulations or safety rules can be classed as 'sabotage', the rules are clearly honoured rather in the breach: 'As far as obstruction goes', wrote Tridon in 1913,[1] 'every lawyer handling labour accident cases knows that very few workers suing employers for damages recover a cent as the victim is usually found to have violated some rule, the strict observance of which would have probably lost him his position.' (Section 19 of the 1930 Road Traffic Act, relating to the hours of transport drivers, has been a case in point.)

Certain working regulations, however, particularly those concerning transport, cannot be rigidly applied — which invites the use of this method; it was, for example, a feature of the series of local disputes on the railways which preceded the 1926 General Strike,[2] and was revived in the railway wage dispute of 1949. 'Working to rule' can have particularly trying consequences in road passenger transport: Mr. Bevin[3] said of the rules of the L.P.T.B. in 1937, in connexion with the 'Coronation' bus strike, that 'he was afraid that if the rules were strictly observed the position in London would be worse than the strike had created'.

Ca' canny methods — variously called go-slow, slow-gear strike, lazy strike, folded-arms strike, and so on — have been used in different ways and for different ends. A ca' canny movement may mean a species of stay-in strike to secure redress for a particular grievance; ca' canny, wrote the *Seaman's Chronicle* on October 24th, 1896,[4] was a handy phrase for 'a new instrument or policy which may be used by the workers in place of a strike'. On the other hand, it may mean a continual limitation of output by the workers in order to keep up piece-work prices: 'As is almost invariably the case when a new seam is opened,' wrote a Welsh strike historian in 1911,[5] 'the men were working "ca' canny" in order to try and prove that the seam was a difficult one to work.' Because of a confusion between these two types of ca' canny, opinions have naturally differed on the extent to which it has been practised. While Professor Cole[6] has said that it is 'very seldom employed and when it is employed, it is always met with fiery denunciations from the leaders of labour', Sir George Askwith, writing at the same time as Cole, devoted a whole chapter[7] to 'the disease of ca' canny', and gave examples from coal-mining, engineering, carting and other transport, shipbuilding, leather-stamping, and, particularly, the building trades — and stated that instances 'could be multiplied indefinitely'. It is clear however that Askwith is including in his definition of ca' canny many unions' 'restrictive practices', which it was thought advisable to reimpose after the first world war. Cole, adopting the narrower definition, mentions the famous ca' canny move-

[1] TRIDON, *The New Unionism* (New York, 1913), p. 53.

[2] Men were insisting, for example, on the 4 m.p.h. limit in goods yards, and insisting that trains should stop dead before any attempt was made to uncouple trucks—although for years it had been the practice to uncouple them while they were still in motion.

[3] T. & G.W.U. *Record* (May 1937), p. 267.

[4] Quoted by PRATT, *Trade Unionism and British Industry* (1904), p. 22. This work is a diatribe on ca' canny, which was ascribed partly to a desire to absorb the unemployed.

[5] EVANS, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield*, 1910-11 (1911), p. 8.

[6] *The Payment of Wages* (1919), p. 24.

[7] See *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), especially pp. 302-3.

ment among seamen in the 'nineties,[1] the four-days-a-week policy of Scots miners in 1914, the threat of ca' canny among Clyde munition workers in February 1915, and the action of a railway restaurant-car staff in a local dispute at the end of the first world war. However, even if 'restrictive practices' are excluded from consideration, ca' canny is not uncommon at times when political pressure is strong against overt striking, especially when labour is in a strong position, as it has been after both wars. 'Will you permit me', wrote a correspondent to *The Times* (August 5th, 1947) 'to explain why the workers are not pulling their weight? Since my demob. I have been employed as Able-Seaman, steward, painter, and now plumber. I have heard the argument dozens of times — in foc'sle, pub, and canteen. This is it: "We were worked to death before the war for a paltry pittance, and were frightened to death of getting the sack, because of mass unemployment and the means test. Well, now it's our turn, and we'll take our time, jobs are plentiful and the unions are strong."' Where Trade Unions have objected to the practice on other than tactical grounds, it has been on grounds of general self-respect: 'the effect of doing bad work for any length of time is to make slovenly men who are incapable of strong, concerted action; and it is for this reason mainly that "ca' canny" is looked upon with disfavour by the responsible leaders of strong trade unions.'[2]

Ca' canny has often been not so much an independent method of labour struggle as a smouldering introduction to the full blaze of a strike; the national dockers' strike movement of the autumn of 1945, for example, was preceded by a fortnight's 'go-slow'. Ca' canny may also be undertaken as a 'fighting retreat' from an unsuccessful strike. In the Weir strike of 1915, the 'Labour-Withholding Committee' (so-called because the name 'strike committee' sounded illegal) eventually ended the strike with a resolution calling for ca' canny action: 'the strike continues, but now inside the factories. We call upon all workers to operate a "stay-in" strike'; in the words of one of those concerned, ca' canny was the order of the day.[3]

At this point we may leave the technical aspects of strikes and go on to consider some of the general influences which have conditioned them.

[1] There was a famous instance among Glasgow dockers in 1889. The employers had refused their claim for a wage-increase; the men struck; the employers beat the strike by the enrolment of some hundreds of agricultural workers. The dockers offered to go back on the condition only that all the agricultural workers were dismissed, and the employers agreed. The Trade Union secretary then pointed out that since the employers had professed themselves satisfied with the (highly inefficient) work of the agricultural workers, when the dockers returned to work they should ca' canny correspondingly—after three days of which their demands were granted.

[2] HILTON and others, *The Other War* (1918), p. 83.

[3] GALLACHER, *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936), p. 43.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL INFLUENCES ON INDUSTRIAL MILITANCY

Section 1: Developments in Trade Unionism

THE basic reason, asserted Mr. George Hicks in 1925,[1] for the existence of our Trade Union movement 'is to exercise that power which arises from the refusal to work'. Yet as Trade Unionism has developed there has emerged a steady tendency to restrict the use of the strike weapon. How has this come about?

The influences affecting the incidence and conduct of strikes may be thought of as economic and non-economic, even though no hard and fast distinction can be made. It might be maintained, for example, that a general improvement in living standards, even if the relative standards of different sections remain unchanged, lessens the need to take drastic action on bread-and-butter questions, and that this, in part at least, is why strikes are less severe than they were. This would be an economic explanation. Or it might be held that the growth of negotiating machinery has lessened the need to strike, because many differences which would otherwise have resulted in strikes can now be composed. This would be an 'institutional' explanation; and there are, of course, many other relevant developments which lie more or less outside the economic field. It will be simplest to consider some of these wider developments first, since the effect of economic changes can best be considered in the light of the statistics of strikes, when these are examined later. We may therefore start by discussing those features in the development of workers' and employers' organizations, in their relations with each other and with the State, which bear on strikes.

We may conveniently discuss these general influences on industrial militancy under four main headings: (1) developments in Trade Unionism itself, (2) the growth of Employers' Organizations, (3) developments in employer-worker relations, and (4) the changing role of the State in industry. The present section will be concerned with the first of these.

Changed composition of the Unions

In Great Britain as elsewhere there has been a tendency for the Trade Union movement to become more diversified, since the movement reflects changes in the structure of industry. In particular, there has been a proportionate growth of 'semi-skilled' workers at the expense of the skilled — and therefore a decline of craft-Union appeal. There has also been a steady increase of women workers in some industries, particularly light engineering; and, apart from the inherent difficulties of Trade Union recruitment among women, in certain Unions they were only belatedly recognized as eligible for membership. And the rapid development of light industries in 'new' areas, notably in the South of England in the years following the depression of the early 1930s, has meant the intake of heterogeneous migrants, many of them entirely without Trade Union tradition.

[1] Reported in *Sunday Worker* (May 17th, 1925).

Moreover there has been a growth of black-coated workers,[1] differentiated from their fellows by the receipt of a salary instead of a wage — even if the salary amounts to no more than the average wage paid in the industry.[2] There have indeed been strikes of clerical workers: the N.U.C., before the post-war collapse in its membership, fought some 28 strikes between 1916 and 1921; there was a notable strike of Irish bank clerks in 1919 (and again in 1946), and an attempted go-slow strike in Manchester post office in 1931; but, in view of their social traditions and the conditions of their work, one would hardly expect clerical workers to be as militant as workers in other trades. In 1926, apart from the action of the Railway Clerks' Association,[3] of most of the 7000 N.U.C. members, and of the Port of London Authority's clerks who struck against the instructions of the T. & G.W.U. (in whose clerical section they were by then organized), the clerks held aloof: as a whole they 'did not participate in the strike, except as scabs. Both the bank and insurance guilds now reaped the benefit of their assiduous cultivation of respectability, for a considerable number of their members left them in their anxiety to dissociate themselves from anything that savoured even remotely of a trade union.'[4] (The hold on these sections of Company Unionism has been eloquent.)

Lastly there is a greater proportion of professional workers (teachers, nurses, junior officials, etc.) within the Trade Union movement proper: at the end of 1941, the members of non-manual workers' Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. (thus excluding, for example, N.A.L.G.O., the U.P.W., and the C.S.C.A., as well as the clerical workers organized in the general Unions) amounted to nearly 150,000. Not only have the non-manual workers' Unions, naturally, little tradition of militancy, but where these workers are organized in Unions of the older type, specific provision has sometimes been made against their taking strike action. For example, after 1926 the Unions concerned were obliged to undertake not to call out supervisory workers in the docks, railways and some other industries.

In short, rapid changes in the occupational pattern, by increasing the number of different kinds of job, may tend to sap the Unions' militancy, if not their strength. At this point however we must consider certain longer-term features of Trade Union organization and practice which have modified or inhibited the use of the strike weapon; the means by which strikes have been controlled, the competing claims of other union activities, and the influence of Trade Union officials.

[1] Although the Occupation Census figures are not strictly comparable, one may say—roughly speaking—that in 1911 less than 4½ per cent of the occupied population of England and Wales were clerical workers, in 1921 nearly 6 per cent, and in 1931 getting on for 7½ per cent.

[2] Colin Clark estimated that in 1928, out of 3.7 million salary-earners, 1.2 million—mostly women and juvenile workers—were getting less than £150 per year; and 'it is also clear that an actual majority of all the salary-earners, including women and juveniles, got in 1928 £4 a week or less' (COLE, *The Condition of Britain* (1937), p. 69). But between the office and the workshop there is a great gulf fixed.

[3] The railway clerks had been largely 'loyal' in 1919; the R.C.A. instructed its members to remain 'neutral' and not to perform work normally done by other grades. But in 1926, contrary to some expectations (considering that the clerical and supervisory grades were not well organized and many stood to lose pension and other rights by striking), about 30 per cent of these grades on the L.M.S., L.N.E., and G.W.R. responded to the strike call.

[4] KLINGENDER, *The Condition of Clerical Workers in Britain* (1935), p. 82. An account of the early attempts to organize bank clerks was given in the course of a debate in the Commons on April 18th, 1923.

The control of strikes and strike funds

> 'The executive council does all it possibly can to prevent any strike . . . We endeavour at all times to prevent strikes. It is the very last thing we would think of encouraging . . . I should say that the members generally are decidedly opposed to strikes, and that the fact of our having a large accumulated fund tends to encourage that feeling amongst them.'
>
> William Allan, Secretary of the A.S.E., in evidence before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, 1867 (*First Report*, p. 37, q. 826-7).

The centralization of Trade Union finance, and therefore of administration, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, has given the Trade Union Executive some control over strikes. While Britain still held its industrial lead, the strong craft Unions could often get concessions — albeit sectional concessions — without resorting to the strike at all. In these circumstances, and with the memory of recent disastrous strikes in mind, Unions could condemn industrial warfare as barbarous, and the strike as 'a ferocious animal that you know will destroy you'.[1]

The Executive's control over strikes was exercised in the first instance through its control over funds, and therefore over strike pay. Some Unions distinguished in their rules between what have since been called offensive strikes (to enforce improvements) and defensive strikes (to resist encroachments). 'No actuary in the world', said Robert Applegarth before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions[2] in 1867, 'can calculate what it requires to pay men on strike or who are locked out'; and so when Trade Unions wanted protection for their funds and were concerned to prove that they could administer them responsibly, it was necessary on this as well as other grounds for them to show that they had some control over strikes, even though they resisted the suggestion that by control they could reduce strikes to actuarial terms. (Applegarth stated that about one-third of the applications to strike at that time were refused.) Generally speaking, offensive strikes had to be sanctioned by the Union Executive,[3] and district or local autonomy persisted only in respect of defensive strikes. Practice has varied, of course, considerably. Sometimes the Executive Committee, while refusing to give official sanction to a strike, or to allow Union funds to be used

[1] See in general WEBB, *History of Trade Unionism* (1926 ed.), pp. 198-200.

[2] *Fourth Report* (1867), p. 7.

[3] Rules of this kind are familiar from early times. They are found, for example, in (Doherty's) National Association for the Protection of Labour (1831), and the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (1834). Such rules were sometimes most specific and detailed. Those of the Friendly Society of Operative Plasterers, for example, provided as follows. Where a strike 'for a new privilege' was in question, there had to be a majority vote in favour; application had to be made to the general secretary for leave to strike; a deputation of neighbouring Trade Unionists had to investigate the state of trade and the likelihood of success in a strike; at least three months' notice had to be given to employers; the Union was bound to attempt conciliation during this interval; applications for leave to strike had to be made in November and March only; if leave was granted, action had to be taken within two months of the expiry of the notice, after which the leave expired; no lodge was allowed to strike unless its members had been in the Union for twelve months; and so on. Moreover, 'no lodge shall be allowed to strike for any new privilege at a time when the numbers already on strike exceed one for every sixty throughout the whole of the society. But should any employer think proper to make a reduction of wages, members so dealt with shall appeal to their respective lodges, who shall have a power to act as the circumstances of the case may direct'. (*Royal Commission on Trade Unions, etc., Appendix to Eleventh and Final Report* (1869), p. 228.

to support it, might tacitly allow the local committee to do what it pleased and to collect funds for the purpose;[1] and even in recent years the distinction between official and unofficial strikes is more finely drawn than might appear.

Strikes have often resulted in establishing or strengthening Trade Union organization, and such strikes have sometimes been 'officialized' in retrospect by the Unions — dispute benefit being paid even before the minimum membership-time has been served. In the 1932 strike against the introduction of the Bedaux system at the Wolsey works, for example, the Leicestershire Hosiery Workers' Union is said to have paid out strike-pay to 'a very large body of unorganized workers'.[2]

Many agreements, of course, contain clauses which preclude the Union from recognizing strikes. Although the precept 'no strikes during negotiations and no negotiations during strikes' is not always[3] incorporated in such agreements, it is widely observed by convention. An extreme, and unique, instance of a strike-restricting agreement is that of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, which is based on the famous 'Terms of Settlement' of 1895, following the national stoppage. Under the Terms of Settlement, a Guarantee Fund of £2000 was established by Trust Deed (the employers' Federation and the Union each depositing £1000 with the Trustees), out of which damages could be awarded to either side when the other violated the agreement by calling for a stoppage in defiance of arbitrators' awards; and the guilty party was bound to make up the fund to its original amount. If a strike did occur, the Union was allowed three days[4] to settle the matter before any claim could be made. Three days have usually proved enough, although strikes have occurred, and, 'as was to be expected, the balance of successful claims on the Trust Fund favoured the Employers'.[5] The Union was fined £300 by an umpire in 1899, but — partly no doubt as a result of mortgaging the right to strike — no national stoppage has taken place in the industry since 1895.

Where Unions are bound by agreements, they have sometimes taken severe disciplinary action against unofficial strikers. The Boilermakers' and Shipbuilders' Union, for example, has more than once, in the past, fined or superseded recalcitrant members and officials; the N.U.G. & M.W. expelled some of its dissidents in the Minority Movement after 1926; the T. & G.W.U. suspended certain officials from office and expelled others after the 1937 bus strike; and so on.

The Executive of a Union, by recognizing a strike, recognizes its liability to

[1] This practice was sufficiently common to have been remarked on in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition, 1910-11), vol. XXV, p. 1027. It prevailed particularly where a national body had come into being through amalgamation of local societies which retained substantial autonomy.

[2] *Labour Monthly* (1932), p. 176.

[3] It is sometimes however explicitly stated; see the agreements of the Iron and Steel Trades Employers' Association with the A.U.B.T.W. and the N.U.G. & M.W. described on p. 81 of the 1944 *Industrial Relations Handbook*.

[4] The interval was originally ten days, but was altered to three days in 1910. The three days' provision, however, is said to have been evaded by carrying on a succession of three-day strikes separated by one day at work.

[5] Sir George Chester, General Secretary of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, in COLE (ed.) *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), p. 419. The strike need not be officially recognized by the Union to make the Union liable to pay damages; it is enough that the strikers should be Union members. The last claim on the fund was made in 1940, to the extent of £5 only (*The Times*, September 24th, 1948).

pay dispute benefit. The payment of dispute benefit has usually been, in fact, under stronger control from the Executive than the payment of other benefits. But although the A.S.E. established from time to time a 'contingent fund' out of which alone strike pay proper was allowed to be granted (to supplement the 'donation' or unemployment benefit which strikers were entitled to receive), and although the Boilermakers[1] rigidly separated their strike fund from their other funds, the principle of a formal separation of strike funds was resisted strongly and successfully by the Unions before the Royal Commission of 1867.[2]

Although a rigid separation of strike funds was rare, it has sometimes been alleged that Unions invested part of their funds in various securities, and even in landed property, in order to make them inaccessible to strikers. It has also been suggested from time to time that — as was recommended by the Economic League in later years — a set policy of investing Trade Union funds in capitalist industrial undertakings accounted for some of the caution displayed by Trade Union leaders regarding strikes. Syndicalist writers in particular were fond of making this accusation. E. J. B. Allen (in *Revolutionary Unionism*, 1909) gave examples covering a number of years; he alleged that the Boilermakers 'black-legged' on the A.S.E in 1897 (i.e. refused to take sympathetic strike action) because 'this Union had their funds sunk in Armstrongs' Co., and were afraid to depreciate their stock by striking with their fellow unionists';[3] he asserted that the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in 1907 'had thousands upon thousands of pounds invested in the different railways,[4] and thus if they struck and had to realize on the stock to pay strike pay, the unloading on the Stock Exchange of so much stuff would have made prices drop enormously and thus they would have lost both ends'; and he insisted that the practice was not uncommon. Similarly Tom Mann asserted that many of the Unions invested their funds in 'distinctly capitalist' business concerns, or in municipal stock, and proposed that Trade Union moneys should be put into concerns run on Guild Socialist lines by the workers for their direct benefit. He instanced coal mines, which would serve the additional purpose of ensuring workers' supplies of coal during a strike.[5]

But although detailed information on these points is not available, it does not seem likely that the practice was widespread. Most Trade Unions were probably chary, then as now, of investing their funds in industrials. The

[1] Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (1926 ed.), p. 99. Even where strike funds were formally separated, advances on these funds could sometimes be obtained; although 'separation' was useful as an argument to discourage members from striking.

[2] See *Appendix to Eleventh and Final Report* (1869), p. 204f.

[3] Rothstein (*From Chartism to Labourism* (1929), p. 192) asserts that the Boilermakers' Secretary, Mr. Robert Knight, whose autocratic 'statesmanship' the Webbs praised so highly, was revealed after his death to have been a shareholder 'in the shipping and dock companies which his union had to fight'.

[4] A like assertion was made by Tridon (*The New Unionism* (New York, 1919), p. 125), on the basis of an article in the *Herald* for December 11th, 1912. He stated that the 'conservative' attitude of the railway Union's leadership before the war was due to the fact that a large part of the Union's reserve fund was invested in the stock of eleven railway companies, 'several of which had been the bitterest opponents of unionism'.

[5] *Industrial Syndicalist* pamphlets, No. 5. The question of the investment of Trade Union funds in capitalist enterprises arose again in 1946, when the Government announced the proposed compensation terms for railway stockholders under nationalization. It was asserted in the Press that the A.S.L.E. & F. held about £290,000 of rail stock, and the T. & G.W.U. about £85,000. (*Evening Standard*, December 17th, 1946.)

greater part of their assets seem to be 'tied up' in public securities and loans — mainly Government Securities — only about 20 to 30 per cent being in the form of Cash and Bank Deposits.[1]

The 'new' Unionism of the 1890s, however, which catered for the unskilled workers, was largely built up on the power to organize strikes and pay dispute benefit. A Union with a very low rate of contribution was able to offer benefits only in respect of strikes, victimization, legal aid, and sometimes funerals; it could not afford to pay for unemployment, sickness, accidents, superannuation, travelling, emigration and so on, except possibly to those who were able to subscribe at a higher rate. Partly for this reason, the 'new' Unionism began by repudiating friendly benefits and undertaking an aggressive industrial policy. Even after the first world war it was possible to write that 'the provision of dispute pay is regarded, in most cases, as the most essential Trade Union function';[2] twenty-five years later, this seems doubtful.

The development of competing functions

> 'The Trade Union that hopes to flourish must be before all a Friendly Society for its members.'
>
> *Industrial and Labour Relations in Great Britain* (New York, 1939; a symposium), p. 89.

The development of 'friendly benefits' gave Trade Unions a wider range of functions which competed with their support of strikes: witness the famous strictures of John Burns on the Unions' 'reckless assumption of the duties and responsibilities that only the State or the whole community can discharge, in the nature of sick and superannuation benefits, at the instance of the middle class'. This, he said, so crippled them that the fear of being unable to pay friendly benefits often made them submit supinely to the employers; the Unions had ceased to maintain the rights of labour, and had 'degenerated into mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions'.[3]

For many years the insistence on the unity of Trade Union funds, regardless of whether the money was to be spent in friendly benefits or strike pay, was denounced as a dishonest attempt to subsidize strikes at the expense of the innocent subscriber to an insurance society. But it did not work out like this. On the contrary, the provision of friendly benefits has on the whole stabilized the Unions' membership and deterred it from irresponsible strikes — and even perhaps damped the ardour of rebels in critical times. 'I want the Government to realize, if they can,' said a Trade Union member in the Commons after the first world war,[4] 'what would have happened to this country, supposing there

[1] See HALPERN, *The Trade Union Movement Since the Outbreak of War, Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin*, October 9th, 1943, p. 236. The remainder of Trade Union assets consist mainly of land, buildings and mortgages.

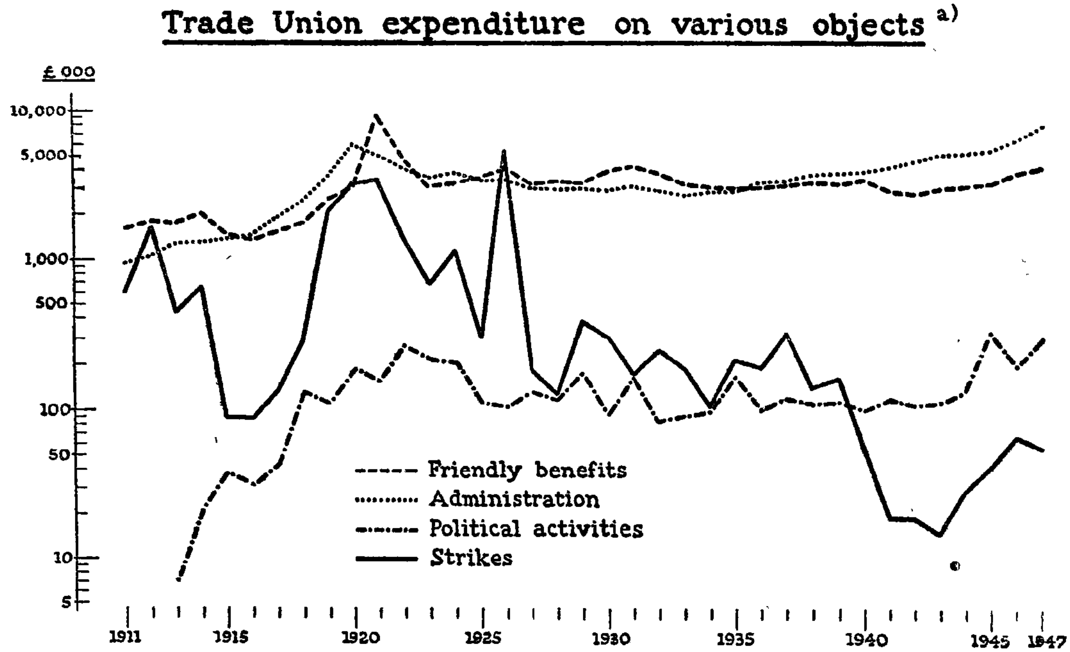
[2] COLE, *Organized Labour* (1924), p. 118.

[3] The corresponding complaint that concentration on friendly benefits discourages militants from Trade Union membership is of course a Left-wing commonplace. Mr. Frank Snelling, writing in *Busman's Punch* (No. 37, November 1935) of 'the "Nons"', mentions first of all 'the man who is too good a trade unionist to belong to the present form of Trade Union, who sincerely believes that permanent officials, sick and welfare sections, political sections, etc., have mined the unions' fighting ability'.

[4] Mr. T. E. Naylor, M.P., Secretary of the London Society of Compositors, quoted by A. HUTT, *Post-War History of the British Working Class* (1937), pp. 66-7.

had been no trade unions to stand between the working class of this country and the revolution which would have undoubtedly broken out, had it not been for the fact that the trade unions were looking after their own members in time of stress and thereby saved the country from disturbance time and time again.'

The changing emphasis in Trade Union expenditure may be graphically illustrated (Graph 1).



GRAPH 1

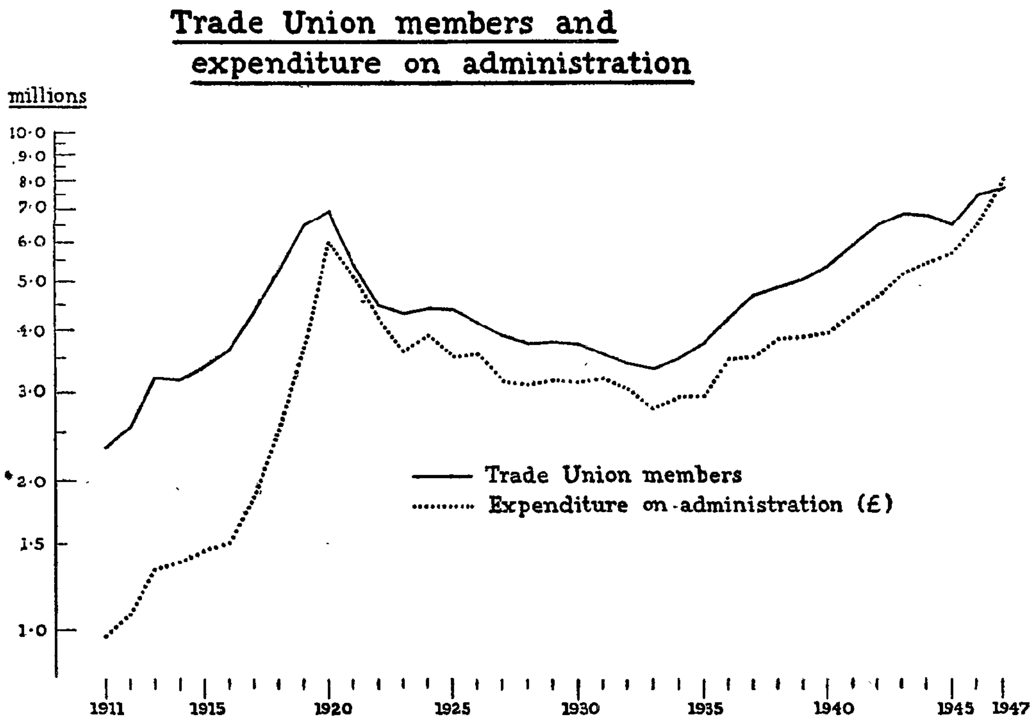
a] In this and the accompanying graphs, figures of Trade Union expenditure and membership relate to registered Trade Unions only. Source: 1911 to 1935, *Abstracts of Labour Statistics*; 1936 to 1947, *Statistical Summaries of Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies* (1939 and 1948).

Expenditure on administration[1] follows the fluctuations of Trade Union membership fairly closely (Graph 2). Expenditure on unemployment benefit, the chief of the 'friendly benefits', is of course primarily related to the incidence of unemployment itself. Political expenditure shows no very marked trend over the period as a whole, but peaks naturally occur in most of the election years.

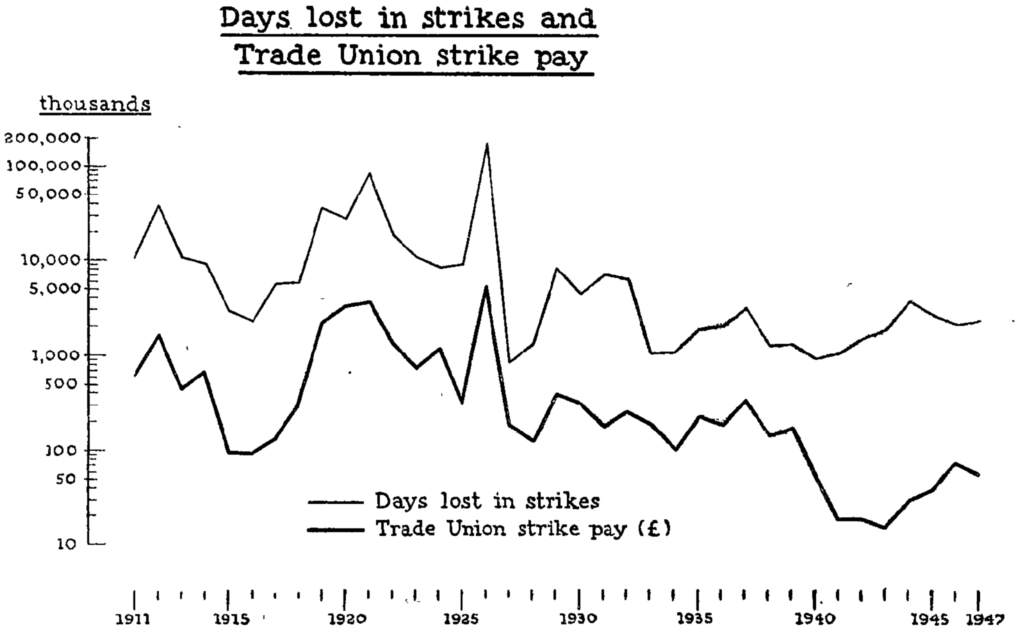
Strike expenditure exceeds expenditure under every other heading in 1926 only. It will be seen from Graph 3 that the direct relation of Trade Union expenditure on dispute benefit to the days actually lost in strikes is broken during the world wars,[2] when the Unions were inhibited from supporting strikes, as well as in certain other years (1921 and 1931, for example) when the payment of

[1] For present purposes, Trade Union expenditure (as classified in the *Reports of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies*) is grouped as follows. 'Administration' includes working expenses, grants to Federations and other bodies, and 'other outgoings'. 'Friendly benefits' include unemployment, travelling and emigration benefits; sick and accident benefit; funeral benefit; superannuation benefit; and 'other benefits including grants to members'. (The term is thus used more widely than by the Webbs.) 'Political activities' (expenditure from Political Fund) and 'strikes' (dispute benefit) are self-explanatory.

[2] As well as in other years of big-scale unofficial strikes.



GRAPH 2



GRAPH 3

unemployment benefit was possibly a prior claim on Trade Union funds. Since 1932, funds have increased every year,[1] and the Unions have tended to concentrate on the activities grouped under the general heading of 'administration' — which includes, of course, participation in machinery designed to prevent strikes. Although the Unions have not only recovered their losses in the years leading up to 1926 but have achieved an unprecedented financial strength, there has not been any further inclination to pursue an active strike policy. Very much the opposite; in fact, the crossing of the curve of expenditure on strikes by that of political expenditure in 1940 is symptomatic of a long-developing change in the Unions' attitude to their problems.

Growth of 'officialdom'

> 'Higher officials of British trade unions breathe an atmosphere of conservatism, gentility and tone that the ordinary worker cannot hope to understand.'
>
> Ryan, *The Irish Labour Movement* (1919), p. 182.
>
> 'There must be some evil machinations at work which say to the workers: "To hell with the officials."'
>
> George Isaacs, Minister of Labour, speaking at Dundee of unofficial strikes, May 19th, 1947.

The development of the Trade Union official as the civil servant of a powerful hierarchy has been steady. Of course, the leadership is in the broad sense controlled by the membership, and its important actions have to be sanctioned by the Executive Committee, or by a delegate conference, or even by a special referendum — though such sanction may sometimes be no more than a formal endorsement of a *fait accompli*. Apart from the 'institutionalism' which afflicts established organizations, Trade Union amalgamation and growth — for increasing size generates bureaucracy — has widened the gap between national and branch official, between responsibility and comparative irresponsibility. Moreover, the complexity and rapidity of industrial change has made negotiation a skilled trade in itself, and has bred a 'class' of negotiators whose everyday preoccupations have tended increasingly to segregate them from the rank-and-file.

The Webbs long ago described with approval the 'cotton men', Trade Union officials chosen by competitive examination for their technical and mathematical ability in interpreting the complicated price-lists determining wages in the cotton industry, as performing a service which, 'like that of a legal or medical professional man, could, with equal propriety, be rendered to either client'.[2] (It is perhaps natural that so impartial an official caste should have appeared first of all in an industry whose prosperity was assured as long as Britain maintained her imperial position and her industrial lead.) Of the bitter cotton lockout of 1893, the *Labour Gazette*[3] commented:

[1] In 1911, registered Trade Unions had 2,321,000 members and £5,622,000 in funds; in 1920 the figures were 6,929,000 and £15,861,000; in 1927 they were 3,903,000 and £9,710,000; and in 1947, 7,758,000 and £50,081,000.

[2] *Industrial Democracy* (1926 edn.), p. 196.

[3] April 1893, p. 7.

> 'The friendship existing between the officers of the Unions and members of the committees of employers' associations was most marked, it being quite customary for them to meet upon equal terms almost daily in places of public resort' —

and, according to the Webbs, for cotton Union officials to be attracted by higher wages to the service of employers' associations. While this was an extreme case, the rift between officials and ordinary membership is general and real.

The development of this rift is repeatedly remarked on in the 1917 Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest, in discussing the success of the Shop Stewards' movement: 'The feeling in the minds of the workers that their conditions of work and destinies are being determined by a distant authority over which they have no influence requires to be taken into consideration, not only by the Government, but by the Unions themselves.'[1] Indeed, the Commission's view that 'Trade Union officials are distrusted' was judged to be 'perhaps the most important finding' by the President of the T.U.C. in the same year: 'As leaders we were appointed to lay down the hammer or the trowel, and stand on the ramparts to warn our members of danger, and in their opinion we had either fallen asleep at our posts, or we have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.'[2] The rank-and-file's diagnosis, then and later, is simple: the 'parasite place-seeking officials' are corrupt; '*safe positions* and *big wages* is the great curse. If a house-dog is *too well fed* he becomes *fat and lazy* and is *useless* for the job of looking after your property. And the same thing applies to our T.U. leaders.'[3]

The apprenticeship of a Trade Union official — unlike that of the officials of other orders — is often served in castigating those dignitaries into whose shoes he feels destined to step. 'The modern trade union bureaucrats', wrote Mr. Arthur Horner in 1928,[4] 'have ringed themselves round with a steel fence of etiquette, the fundamental principle of which is "loyalty to colleagues, whate'er befall". No secret society has ever so effectively intimidated its members or subjected them more completely to its formulas. They constitute a State within a State; a thing apart, sufficient unto itself. Its interests conflict in every way with those whom they claim to represent.' Feeling against the officials, although it has usually run in a narrow channel, also runs deep.

Those who are concerned with Trade Union negotiations today will assert that both sides now 'speak the same language' and are interested in the first instance in fact-finding rather than in the assertion of rival claims, and that the authority of Trade Union representatives has grown immeasurably in consequence. In the words of *The Times*,[5] 'the long and painful transition from the barricades to the board-room has at length been accomplished, and today the

[1] *Cd.* 8696 (1917), pp. 7-8.

[2] *T.U.C. Report* for 1917, p. 55. In the second world war the Shop Steward himself came under suspicion:

> If with the foreman he's agreed,
> He's sold the men or been weak-kneed.
> When for the men he tries to cater,
> He's called a blinking agitator.

(See JEFFERYS, *The Story of the Engineers* (1945), p. 261.)

[3] *Busman's Punch*, No. 7 (May 1933).

[4] *The Bureaucracy in the Miners' Federation* (Miners' Minority Movement, 1928).

[5] November 2nd, 1946.

T.U.C. exerts its influence, not so much through strikes and demonstrations, as through reasoned arguments before an independent arbitrator or an industrial court — or in the Cabinet Room. It is a far cry from Tolpuddle to Transport House . . .' It may indeed be that the fighting days of Trade Unionism are over, and that — to borrow an unhappy phrase of Marshal Pétain — we have discovered a new form of warfare, whose watchwords are 'the maximum of comfort, the minimum of danger'. Obviously it is better to win bloodless battles if one can; and no doubt, as William Allan said before the 1867 Commission, the disposition to strike is inversely proportionate to the strength of Trade Unions. But the removal of conflict to a remote national level, out of range of local clamour, and the fighting of industrial battles on a symbolical plane by expert negotiators armed with formulæ in the privacy of a Joint Industrial Council rather than with the crude weapons of the picket line, has widened the cleavage between the Trade Union hierarchy and the rank and file. Moreover the very field of battle has been shifting in recent years. Separate unions still struggle for sectional advantages to their own members, but the action of the T.U.C., as the spokesman of the movement as a whole, in seeking to secure this or that extension of the nation's social services, has gained in importance. In this context, of course, it is argued that strikes are improper because, even though they may be won, their very success in a limited field may jeopardize wider gains. But again, this conception of Trade Union action is so new to the rank and file that its acceptance by top-level Trade Unionists has so far tended to deepen the rift between them.[1]

So far we have examined those features of Trade Unionism which have operated to control strikes; but this is only one side of the picture, for the control has never been wholly effective. Unofficial strikes, 'alternative leaderships', breakaway Unionism, and the activities of outside bodies, have often developed singly or together; and these must now be considered.

Unofficial strikes

> 'The only man who desires a strike for fun is the man who wants to go to hell for a pastime.'
>
> W. Payne in *Busman's Punch*, No. 53, March 1937.

An unofficial strike is one which is not recognized by the Executive Committee of a Union; although now that most strikes are unofficial the term is being used more loosely.[2] Such strikes may, and often do, have support from the Union at Branch level, and sometimes at higher level. On occasion they may even receive tacit approval from Executive members themselves. Mr. William Gallacher, a Clydeside shop steward in the first world war and later Communist

[1] In particular industries—most notably perhaps in the boot and shoe industry—there is little isolation of officials from rank and file. The boot and shoe trade is more than 95 per cent organized, and there is a very high proportion of officials to members (62 full-time officials, apart from national officers, to 90,000 members). Large branches of 900 or over are officered by full-time officials who are in constant touch with the rank-and-file workers as well as with their employers. This form of close-knit organization, which is possible partly because of the localization of the industry, is however the exception.

[2] For example, the 1947 strike of Durham colliery winders and enginemen was referred to in the Press as an unofficial strike—presumably because it was opposed by the N.U.M.—although it was officially supported by the winding enginemen's Union (see pp. 41-2).

M.P. for West Fife, has drawn a distinction between unofficial strikes and 'spontaneous' strikes: 'The strike', he wrote of a famous dispute of 1915, 'was, and still is, wrongly referred to as an "unofficial" strike'.

> 'Such a term is entirely misleading. Branch officials, district officials, and in some cases, executive officials (like myself) were involved. The more correct term for such a strike is "spontaneous strike". Such strikes have played an important part in the development of the trade union movement and are often recognized and supported by the national officials. Such a strike is often necessary when something occurs, leaving only the option of submitting or fighting. It may be the introduction of a non-unionist, where trade union membership is insisted on by the union as a condition of employment. It may be a cut in the recognized rate or, as was the case at Weir's, the introduction of privileged workers from outside at the expense of Weir's own employees.'[1]

The question of the degree of support within Unions for unofficial strikes was ventilated in the House of Commons on August 5th, 1947, when Major Lloyd asked Mr. Isaacs, the Minister of Labour, about the propriety of men who refused to participate in an unofficial strike being disqualified from participating in any voluntary fund, and even from retaining what they had already paid in:

> 'The position depends upon the rules of the unions', said Mr. Isaacs, 'over which I have no control.'
> Major Lloyd: 'Is it not the case that the Minister has to shut his eyes and do nothing about the grossest victimization of individuals who refuse to take part in unofficial strikes and who have their voluntary rights prejudiced by their comrades in the union?'

Mr. Isaacs disclaimed knowledge of any Trade Union acting in such a fashion (it would indeed be surprising if it had) but admitted that he was under the impression that 'some branches improperly brought pressure to bear' — in which case 'the head office of the union promptly took action to the contrary'.[2]

Thus, although unofficial strikes very often have the general support or connivance of branch officials, there still remains a distinction between a strike which has full recognition and financial support from the Executive and one which does not.

Unofficial strikes may involve the violation of the strikers' contracts only, but more often they violate both contract and agreement. The 1906 Trade Disputes Act made it impossible for Unions to be penalized even if they persuaded their members to strike in breach of contract; but a strike in breach of a voluntary agreement may be a serious matter for a Union. The violation of agreements is not of course illegal; but in practice if Unions connive at such a violation, they invite a retaliatory repudiation of the whole agreement by the employers and even, possibly, a national lockout. Sometimes of course the pressure from

[1] *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936), p. 42. Weir's had introduced a body of American workers, giving them a return ticket to the U.S.A., a wage 10s. per week higher than their own men had been getting, and a guaranteed bonus of £10 after six months' work.

[2] *Hansard*, vol. 441, No. 157, cols. 1275-6.

below may be too strong for the Executive to resist; some Unions, moreover, have a special court consisting of rank-and-file members to which strikers can carry their case against their officials and Executive Committee — and this court may decide that the unofficial strike must be recognized. But generally speaking Unions regard agreements as 'morally' and practically binding.

Hence the frequent complaints, to quote Lord Islington's words in 1919,[1] of the 'unmoral attitude taken up by sections of the workers of repudiating their own appointed leaders and refusing to abide by the results of collective agreement'. The appeal to morality has been met, by the Left, with the argument that 'the right to strike belongs to the workers; the trade union executives are their representatives. If the workers do not agree with the position taken by their representatives they can show it by striking. As long as the employer retains and exercises the right to close down his works in whole or in part, and to dismiss workers without their consent, it is difficult to see any grounds for moral indignation on his part if the workers resort to lightning or unofficial strike action.'[2] Further, if Trade Union officials argue that workers make a mistake in taking unofficial action, because it jeopardizes the position of the union by weakening its authority in the eyes of the employers, 'the workers could with equal right argue that the officials made a mistake in signing an agreement and adhering to a procedure which jeopardizes the position of the union by weakening its usefulness in the eyes of the workers'. Here however we pass from ethics to expediency.

Unfortunately there is no systematic evidence of the prevalence of unofficial strikes at different times.[3] It is sometimes assumed — quite wrongly — that unofficial strikes are a fairly recent phenomenon due to the acceptance of compulsory arbitration by the Trade Union leadership. But unofficial strikes are almost as old as Trade Unions. In the present century, there was widespread unofficial activity before 1914; the national mining strike of 1912, for example, grew out of the unofficial strikes of 1910-11; in building and engineering also the initiative came from below; the sympathetic strikes in Great Britain associated with the Irish General Strike of 1913 were unofficial; and so on. Of course, almost all strikes during the war years, and many in 1919, were unofficial strikes. 1923 and 1924 were marked by dockers' strikes in London, Hull, Manchester, Grimsby and Cardiff, strikes of ship-repairers at Southampton, of Wembley Exhibition workers, of London tube railway workers, and others. In fact, complained *Labour Monthly*,[4] during the years following the slump of 1921 'there has hardly been a single official national dispute other than the Boilermakers'. It [the strike movement] has consisted almost entirely of unofficial, local sporadic struggles, carried on at best with the passive approval of the National Union, and often in the face of active Union opposition. We find men striking and ordered back by the Union; we find men striking and fined by the Union for

[1] *Hansard (Lords)*, vol. 33, col. 135.

[2] MAHON, *Trade Unionism* (1937), pp. 41, 42.

[3] One might try to get an indication of this by, for instance, dividing the amount paid out by the Unions in dispute benefit by the number of days lost in strikes — the assumption being that years when the strike-pay-per-day-lost is low will be years of high unofficial strike activity. But the amount paid out by Unions is limited by their capacity, as well as their willingness, to pay; and rates of strike pay vary between different Unions, different grades of workers, and different periods. Nor does other indirect evidence help.

[4] February 1924, p. 91.

doing so; we find men striking and subjected to a joint battery by Union officials and the Press of censure and reproach.'

In 1927 and 1928, when strikes were at their lowest ebb, there were nevertheless a number of unofficial outbreaks, notably those attributed to the Minority Movement in the mining and clothing industries. Sporadic strikes in defiance of the Unions continued in the years following, particularly after 1932;[1] some of them by no means negligible. The years 1935 to 1937, and especially 1936, were particularly notable for unofficial strikes. This is shown by the Ministry of Labour's Report for 1936 (*Cmd.* 5431), and by statements made by the Minister in the Commons to the effect that about half the strikes in 1935-36 were unofficial.[2] In 1937, the General Council of the T.U.C. had to circularize Trades Councils to the effect that they should not actively encourage strikes which were not recognized by the Unions concerned. Since 1940, of course, almost all strikes have been unofficial.

Unofficial strikes are not always deliberate acts of rebellion against the Unions, for disputes may arise in such a form that they appear, rightly or wrongly, to be insoluble by constitutional methods. Sudden encroachments may need to be met by sharp action. A curtailment of meal times, for example; 'speeding-up' without warning; some innovation involving the dilution of labour; victimization; if these were allowed to pass without immediate protest or were unable to be dealt with save by complex and lengthy procedures, the men's sense of solidarity — and hence the strength of their Trade Union in negotiation — might be severely weakened. Thus, even though many agreements contain provisions against striking before the procedural conditions have been fulfilled, quick strikes in breach of agreement may strengthen the Union's hand even though its officials are bound to repudiate them.[3]

Long-term agreements are obviously convenient; but the longer their term the more likely they are to become obsolete — and hence to result in unofficial strikes. It has often been said that the strategy of British collective bargaining is determined by the fact that it is to the employers' interest to tie the workers by collective agreements in anticipation of a boom, and thus to hamstring their bargaining power when it is strongest — while conversely it is to the workers' interest to tie the employers by stabilizing wages and conditions before a slump in order to prevent an attack when they themselves are weakest. Hence unofficial strikes tend to break out at the beginning of an upswing, when living costs have begun to rise but the Unions have not yet been able to act on their members' behalf.

[1] E.g. against wage-cuts (as at the Dagenham Ford works), against rationalization and speed-up methods (as at the Brentford Firestone Tyre Works, Birmingham Lucas Motor Accessories and Hope's Steel Window works, East London Venesta Plywood works); and for the right to organize (as at the Oxford Pressed Steel works, Coleman's Mantle works and Fairdale's clothing factory). Communists were active in many of these strikes.

[2] Mr. Ernest Brown stated on November 12th, 1936 (*Hansard*, vol. 317, col. 1026) that from January 1935 to September 1936 at least 530 strikes out of 1,101 recorded disputes had been unofficial. On July 1st, 1937 (*Hansard*, vol. 325, col. 2167) he gave the figure, for 1936 alone, of at least 435 unofficial strikes out of a total of 818. (These strikes involved 210,000 workers, out of some 316,000; and 900,000 days lost out of 1,829,000.) In 1936 there were, in addition, 115 strikes about which no information could be had on this point; and a further 89 were strikes of unorganized workers. Thus no more than 189 strikes – less than one-quarter – were known to be officially supported.

[3] In fact, Trade Union negotiators often use the argument that unless the employer concedes a certain point they cannot be responsible for any unofficial action which their members may take. (See p. 255).

Changes in production methods may also make agreements obsolete. This is most evident, of course, in time of war, when industrial conditions may change quickly and decisively to the workers' disadvantage, while employment and profits are high. Moreover at such times the Unions are bound by an industrial truce and for patriotic and other reasons are anxious not to jeopardize their position by countenancing strikes.[1]

Again, the very comprehensiveness of agreements inevitably produces anomalies; and since Trade Union officials cannot be aware of all workshop conditions and implications, unofficial strikes may develop on questions of interpretation.

Sometimes moreover the inability, for one reason or another, of Union officials to explain the course of negotiations satisfactorily to their members gives rise to suspicion and unofficial action. It may be that the attitude of the employers has been at fault:

> 'The Conference table has an attraction for us all, but invariably, when we meet, the procedure is on these lines. The representatives of the workmen state their case, ethical and economic. The employers thank them courteously, leave the room, and then come back and say, "We have considered your case, but we are sorry we cannot concede anything." The workers' representatives then ask for evidence that will enable them to go back to the workers and explain the reasons why the demand has been refused. The employers shrug their shoulders and say, "We are not in a position to supply the evidence which you require; we have given your case sympathetic consideration, and we regret that circumstances do not permit us to go any further." In such circumstances the workers' representatives have to go back to thousands of workpeople and say there can be no change, and when some inquisitive person asks why, they can only say, "The employers have told us so".'[2]

But even where concessions are made by the employers, if negotiations are held without explanatory publicity and settlements are announced in a 'take-it-or-leave-it' fashion, acute dissatisfaction may be aroused:

> 'I don't know how we got into this mess. The men blamed the Union officials, the officials said that if we did not know about the agreement it was our fault. As no one was prepared to hold the baby, it was decided to disown the damn thing altogether and get in a spot of direct action — in short, to go on strike.'[3]

Again, unadjusted grievances 'tend to be magnified in geometric proportion to the time elapsing';[4] and delay is still one of the most potent precipitating causes of unofficial strikes. During the first world war it was noted that 'in some instances ten weeks have elapsed without a settlement, and after a strike has

[1] For obvious reasons strikes in wartime tend to take on a political tinge. In the first world war, for instance, the unofficial strike movements were concerned first of all with wages; next with dilution; and after the beginning of 1917 with directly political issues. Feeling had been aggravated by successive 'comb-outs' of industry, and unofficial Workers' Committees were formed to protect workers, if necessary by the use of the strike.

[2] Quoted by Chang, *British Methods of Industrial Peace* (New York, 1936), pp. 211-12.

[3] *Busmen on Strike* (1936) – an account of a successful unofficial strike of that year.

[4] Spriegel and Lansburgh, *Industrial Management* (1947 edn.), p. 94.

taken place, the matter has been put right within a few days'.[1] By 1946, 'the pattern is becoming familiar. Negotiations drag on for months while men are at work. The men strike and a decision is reached in a week. There are repeated ineffectual meetings. Then the Ministry of Labour brings both sides together with the eyes of the public upon them and within twenty-four hours there is agreement. It is unfortunately only too obvious what moral dissatisfied workers tend to draw from the contrast'.[2] 'If there is one thing which can be more damaging to the orderly conduct of industrial relations than an unofficial strike, it is a successful unofficial strike'; Trade Union officials 'have a duty to the public, as well as to themselves, to make sure of the closest contact between the different levels of their organization. Together with all other unions and with employers' organizations they have a responsibility for examining their negotiating machinery and for making sure that it will work both swiftly and competently.'[3] Such statements of the obvious could be multiplied indefinitely; but delays persist.

Some delay is of course inherent in the working of the machinery itself. It is true that workers sometimes fail to appreciate 'the unavoidable period required for the ascertainment of the facts, the hearing of both sides, and the well-considered determination of the points at issue. Hasty decisions do not create confidence.'[4] Yet, as was admitted in the Report quoted, delay generates suspicion. Mr. Kellaway, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions during the first world war, had pointed out in the Commons in 1917[5] that the dilatory process of arbitration often caused more irritation than the differences at issue — a verdict which has been amply confirmed during recent years. Similarly the Burleigh-Macassey Commission had reported in 1915[6] that the questions brought before it were 'not so illustrative of disputes on definite matters of principle' as 'indicative of local friction surrounding the relationship of particular employers and employed', but that if these issues were not quickly dealt with they would lead 'to a state of irritation among organized workers which quickly spreads beyond the boundaries of the establishment where the trouble first arose to other works, and frequently from adventitious causes wholly unconnected with the origin and merits of the dispute it becomes elevated into a matter of principle affecting all employers and munition workers throughout the district'.

Conversely, it may be of significance that in the boot-and-shoe industry, which has an unusual record of industrial peace, every dispute, even if it goes to the last stage of the arbitration machinery, is settled within six weeks — decisions, moreover, being made to date back to when the complaint was sent in.[7]

There is, however, a distinction to be made between administrative delay,

[1] *Summary of the Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest* (1917), *Cd.* 8696, p. 5.

[2] *The Times* (August 14th, 1946), on the unofficial strike of London gasworkers.

[3] *The Times* (January 17th, 1947), on the unofficial strike of road haulage workers. Because of the prevalence of unofficial strikes precipitated by delays, attention was at length given to the question in 1947 by the National Joint Advisory Council, with the aim of shortening the procedure of Wages Councils and other statutory wage-fixing bodies.

[4] Report of the McCardie Committee on Labour Embargoes, December 1918 (see *12th Report of Proceedings under the Conciliation Act*, 1896, *during the Years* 1914-1918, vol. I, p. 32, 1919).

[5] April 27th. [6] *Clyde Munition Workers Inquiry* (*Interim Report*), paras. 2, 4, 17.

[7] See *The Times* (September 24th, 1948). The 1940 National Arbitration Order made an important provision for the possible retrospective application of settlements; see O. Kahn-Freund, *Collective Agreements under War Legislation*, *Modern Law Review* (April 1943), p. 132.

which could often be curtailed,[1] and delay due to a plain failure to agree or an obstinate refusal to compromise. The very existence of elaborate constitutional machinery may encourage such obstinacy, since the side whose patience gives way first is automatically put in the wrong. It is also true that overworked Trade Union officials may simply not have time to deal with every case as it arises; but the delay may also be deliberate, either owing to the tactics of employers who stand to gain financially by postponing wage increases, or else owing to the adoption of a convention of delay for different reasons.

The public interest has often been invoked in support of a deliberate policy of delay. For this reason the Canadian *Lemieux Act* of 1907 (amended 1911) has often won praise,[2] since it provided for a cooling-off period during which the question in dispute was to receive publicity. Certain British procedures for avoiding disputes, however, such as the York Memorandum in the engineering industry, seem to be based mainly upon the principle of organized delay.[3] Here, disputed questions must first be discussed by management and workers on the spot. Failing agreement, the workers may approach the employers by deputation. Failing agreement here, a Local Conference of both sides' organizations is held within seven days. Failing agreement here, the question goes to a Central Conference which meets each month. No stoppage may take place while this procedure is being run through; but if agreement is not reached at the Central Conference, nothing further can be done. If a stoppage takes place, it may be argued that this constitutes a breach of the agreement of which these provisions are a part; and if the A.E.U. recognizes such a stoppage it runs the risk of precipitating a national lockout. It remains an open question whether such methods do not generate more trouble than they evade.[4]

It is no doubt the assumption that strikes are the expression of mere hot-headedness that underlies the frequent insistence on 'cooling-off periods', although it has been held by some experienced arbitrators that little harm is done by allowing a short strike to take place in order to 'blow off steam' before attempting a settlement. By no means all strikes however are amenable to the methods of child psychology; and some of the irritation ascribed to delay may simply be due to the fact that the eventual settlement is adverse.[5] An unfavourable settle-

[1] See P.E.P., *British Trade Unionism* (1948), p. 58, where details are given of prescribed 'delays' in the procedure of statutory boards and tribunals.

[2] See, for example, Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), ch. xxiv; and the F.B.I. series on *The Resources of the Empire* (1924): *Communications*, p. 79. The chief merit of the Canadian Act, however, seems to have lain less in the provision of a cooling-off period than in the provision for publicity: 'the experience in the working of the Canadian Act has shewn that it has failed in practice to prohibit strikes and lockouts and that its success has lain in the power to secure an impartial inquiry and a public pronouncement upon the facts and circumstances of the disputes concerned' (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. XXX (supplementary to 11th edn.), p. 173).

[3] The 'provisions for avoiding disputes' comprised in the 1914 York agreement had already been outlined in the agreement of 1907, and were re-embodied with slight modification in that of 1922.

[4] Mr. Ernest Brown stated (Commons, July 1st, 1937) that 'at least' 25 out of 45 engineering strikes in 1936 had been unofficial – a proportion (56 per cent) which is a little higher than that for industry as a whole. It was possibly considerably higher; though probably not as high as 90 per cent, the figure asserted by *Labour Monthly* (August 1939, p. 486).

[5] A Communist source asserted in 1935 of the 'York' procedure described above, that out of 500 cases submitted to the Central Conference during the previous ten years, 'the workers have only won 24 outright'. (Tom Roberts, *The Importance of the English Aircraft Strike, Communist International*, vol. XII, No. 13 (July 5th, 1935).)

ment may be the more irritating because so much time has been spent in reaching it.

It is often the Trade Union officials who have had to bear the brunt of the workers' discontent and irritation, and unofficial strikes sometimes have the character of strikes against the Unions themselves. The 1948 P.E.P. Report on British Trade Unionism distinguishes, albeit rather sweepingly,[1] between three levels of Trade Union membership: national executive and permanent officials, active branch membership, and rank-and-file membership. Unofficial strikes, says the Report, come from the third level, often with the support and sometimes at the instigation of the second level. (In some Unions, notably of course the A.E.U., 'second level' shop stewards are particularly in touch with the third level and are therefore more 'radical' than ordinary branch officials.) Thus it is that unofficial strikes sometimes develop an apparently greater hostility to Union officials than to employers. Naturally, interested political bodies such as the Communists have encouraged these tendencies, but it is an oversimplification to attribute their existence simply to the political agitation which may be built round them.

Perhaps the best case in point is the recent series of dock strikes. The first of these — the nation-wide strike of the summer and autumn of 1945 — was a classic example of a 'strike against the Union'. Its immediate issue was one of wages (the establishment of a national basic rate), but there were many undercurrents. Irritation at the delay and apparent ineffectiveness of the negotiating procedure; resentment at the attitude of certain Trade Union officials; anxiety over the prospects of a permanent decasualization scheme — against such a background the demands multiplied and the strike grew.[2] It must be remembered that Trade Union branch life had largely broken down in the dock areas. There had been migration of dockers in wartime. Dockers' Trade Union branches tend in any case to be so large that sometimes no hall can be obtained big enough to house a full Branch meeting; even the payment of dues may be made either on the job or by the wives and children of members on their behalf. Moreover, the establishment of a 'closed shop' in the industry has accentuated the routine character of Trade Union membership.

The 1945 dockers' strike began in the first place with the workers at the Surrey Docks, who started 'going slow'; but a far wider movement soon developed. (Dock strikes tend to spread, since ships can so easily be switched from port to port.) By the peak of the strike, some 38,000 (*The Times*) to 44,000 (*Manchester Guardian*) dockers were out, and the strike had taken on an anti-Union character:

> 'The whole-time official, especially the area officer, stands as the representative of union bureaucracy. It is his business to prevent precipitate action, to curb local unruliness, and to insist on the formalities being observed. He is the cockshy of every would-be leader and, since the dock employers no longer have cloven hooves, resentment is directed even more against him than against the representative of an impersonal Government, the local Director of Port Labour.'[3]

[1] The distinction obviously cannot be pressed too far; cf. G. D. H. COLE's critical essay in the *Political Quarterly* for January-March 1949, vol. XX, No. 1.

[2] See also pp. 230-1.

[3] *Manchester Guardian* (October 12th, 1945).

The officials were not slow to bring a counter-accusation against 'agitators': but this was warmly denied by the dockers' leaders:

> 'We are ordinary Liverpool dockers fighting a straight fight for a square deal. We do not want Communism, or political propaganda of any kind to enter this conflict. We are not prepared to listen to the dictates of the Transport and General Workers' Union. For twenty years we have been dictated to by them. We know that the union has been arbitrating on our behalf, but I challenge the union to state the dockers' case.'[1]

This emerged as the main issue:

> 'This antagonism towards their own union, it must be stressed, is no sudden development... They state that time after time they have been "let down" by the union's handling of their complaints. Indeed, a list of union "failures" has been compiled. One striker said, "Because their hands are tied is always their explanation for their own inaction. They have become our masters instead of our servants".'[2]

In the words of a leaflet issued by the strikers:

> 'The cry is young blood and more young blood, and when you have been sucked dry — it's Out, "has been", you've had it... We have pleaded, begged aid for the unions to fight for better conditions. The unions have pledged us that they are going forward, that the official machinery has been set in motion. It has been set in motion round and round, getting nowhere, nothing happening. This has been going on for years. And the dockers decided to take the matter into their own hands and demand Government intervention. We don't want the moon, just a little comfort and security.'[3]

The political faith of the strikers in 'their' Government was strong. They conducted themselves with a discipline which was noted by most sections of the Press and, while they resented the threat of civilian blacklegs, they made no attempt to interfere with the 18-20,000 troops who were used to unload ships. And their final action, after proclaiming a 30-days' 'truce' and returning to work in good order, was to maintain a complete 'shadow Trade Union' without breaking up the Transport and General Workers' Union itself. This shadow body was the 'National Port Workers' Defence Committee'. It had a national chairman, organizer and five regional committees with representation from ports which had not taken part in the strike. Its purposes were (*a*) to take up victimization cases — for when the strikers began to feel the financial pinch and to approach the P.A.C., cases of dismissal began to be reported;[4] (*b*) to secure control of the Union machinery and to 'clean it up'; and (*c*) to continue in being until the unofficial organization could be merged in the Union itself. The 'shadow' has survived, in name at least, even if the substance of its aims has not been achieved.

[1] Mr. Campbell, Chairman of the Liverpool strike committee, reported in *Manchester Guardian* (October 6th, 1945).
[2] *Manchester Guardian* (October 5th, 1945).
[3] Quoted in *Manchester Guardian* (October 31st, 1945).
[4] *Manchester Guardian* (October 23rd, 1945).

The hostility of dockers towards their officials was once again evidenced in the widespread strike of 1948, which broke out on a question of discipline — action having been taken against eleven men who had objected to the conditions under which they were unloading a cargo of zinc oxide. Political influence was again alleged — the more confidently, since the Communist Party had, in the interval, shifted into more open opposition to the Trade Union leadership. But it is not clear how strong this influence was. *The Times*[1] considered that the strike was 'not Communist in its inception', but that 'extremists have been steadily strengthening their hold upon the *ad hoc* organization that has been set up'. There were certainly some changes in the composition of the strike committee during the strike; two members who left it 'declared that it was now almost entirely dominated by Communists and fellow-travellers', and were accused in their turn by the committee of having left 'because they were not allowed to pursue political ends in the committee' (versions which are not incompatible). To Mr. Deakin, who said that the original committee of 48 had contained no less that 37 Communists and fellow-travellers, the committee replied that it consisted of 27 non-politicals, 5 Communists, and 10 Labour men; though even if this were true the Communists may have had a controlling voice on the 'inner council' which, according to a *Daily Worker* report,[2] seems to have taken the main decisions.

In the 1949 strikes, which were connected with the dispute of the Canadian Seamen's Union, Communist influence was of course far more evident; but to treat the whole outbreak as nothing but a Communist plot — as does, in effect, the Ministry of Labour's *Review of the British Docks Strikes*, 1949 — is surely a drastic oversimplification. The history of all these strikes reveals not only a resentment by the dockers of the tighter discipline necessitated by decasualization, but also an enduring suspicion of their own main Union which seems to have been aggravated by Union participation — however defensible — in the managerial functions of the Dock Labour Board. Against this background the Communists have won their influence by default.[3]

It is however understandable that hardworking and harassed Trade Union officials, when their membership seems to be getting out of hand, should lay all the blame on agitators, *agents provocateurs*, Communists and the like. 'Today', reported the *News Chronicle*[4] during the Grimethorpe troubles of 1947, 'union officials in South Yorkshire were looking for a "phantom" lorry alleged to contain 15 or 16 men who are supposed to be travelling from pit to pit calling upon miners to strike.' Yet unofficial strikes in general — and particularly the Grimethorpe strike — cannot be wholly ascribed to political poltergeists. 'The average working man', wrote the same journal of the London gasworkers' strike of 1946,[5] 'does not sacrifice the whole of his pay packet and his union strike pay without feeling — rightly or wrongly — that he has a just grievance'; indeed, the power of political agitators to play on grievances is largely a function of the reality of the grievance and the time elapsing before it is dealt with. One cannot agitate in a vacuum. Significantly perhaps, the number of strikes reached its all-time maximum during the recent war, when Communist influence had been

[1] June 25th and 26th, 1948. [2] June 30th, 1948.
[3] For a fuller account of these events, see KNOWLES, *The Post-War Dock Strikes*, *Political Quarterly*, July-September 1951.
[4] August 29th, 1947. [5] August 2nd, 1946.

thrown into the opposite scale and the influence of political splinters such as the Trotskyists was more or less negligible.

It is true that 'hole-and-corner stoppages', as Lord Citrine called them,[1] are very much less severe than the strikes of thirty years ago, though they are certainly more damaging to the authority of the Trade Unions. But it is too much to suggest, as even the moderate Press does on occasion, that the whole of the Trade Union system is being thrown into disrepute, the whole basis of voluntary negotiation is being destroyed, and the whole structure of Trade Unionism may be swept away. Unofficial strikes have been singularly unaffected by exhortation. Nor do more drastic measures, such as that of the Governmental lockout,[2] seem likely to produce permanent results. Indeed, the unofficial strike may even come to be tacitly recognized, by the public if not by the Unions,[3] as an essential safety-valve under a system of national collective bargaining.

'Alternative leadership'

Various ephemeral rank-and-file movements have appeared from time to time in different industries. The most famous of these was of course the Shop Stewards' movement on the Clyde during the first world war, its organization being afterwards largely incorporated into that of the A.E.U. Other similar movements followed, during and after the war. These movements were more or less spontaneous; and although most rank-and-file movements since 1921 have been aided, abetted, or influenced by Communists, there has remained an element of spontaneity about them. Their members have usually remained in the Unions so as to avoid a split, the object being to combat official policy from within.[4] Sometimes however dissatisfaction has been so strong that breakaway Unions have been formed.

Breakaway Unions

> 'This Congress pledges itself to discourage in every possible way the formation of new Trade Unions, and directs the General Council to refuse to

[1] T.U.C. *Report* (1943), p. 209.

[2] Mr. Shinwell, as Minister of Fuel and Power, closed down two Lanarkshire pits in 1946 owing to the number of unofficial strikes which had taken place. Compare the form of legislation approved by the Australian Labour Party in June of the same year, which gave authority to suspend or dismiss miners 'causing irresponsible pit strikes' – even in a non-nationalized industry. In 1949 the Australian Government went so far as to 'freeze' Trade Union strike funds during a miners' strike.

[3] Mr. T. Williamson (N.U.G. & M.W.), in moving a resolution at the 1948 T.U.C. in condemnation of 'the disloyal activities of small factions of the Movement', admitted that unofficial strikes might be justified 'where recalcitrant employers refuse to negotiate or to take part in joint machinery' (1948 T.U.C. *Report*, p. 337). But why unofficial, in such a case?

[4] For example, the following statement of 'Rank and File Policy' appeared in *Busman's Punch*, No. 34 (August 1935):

> 'THIS MOVEMENT stands for 100 per cent membership of the T. & G.W. Union.
> IT DOES NOT stand for breakaways of any kind.
> THIS MOVEMENT stands for the right of using the strike weapon.
> IT DOES NOT stand for the indiscriminate use of that weapon.
> THIS MOVEMENT hopes to see the supporters of its policy gain representative positions.
> IT IS NOT an electoral machine; nor does it exist for the purpose of glorifying individuals.
> THIS MOVEMENT is not a political party, or part of a party.
> IT DOES NOT debar members of any political party, if they are members of the T. & G.W.U. . . .'

accept the affiliation of any Trade Union which is composed of members who have broken away from an existing Union affiliated to Congress.'

Resolution carried at 1927 Trades Union Congress.

The development of breakaway Unions in recent years has been partly a product of the attempts at Trade Union amalgamation and the unification of wages policy. These are notoriously difficult to achieve since they involve an abdication of sectional advantages; 'the eternal fear of breakaway bodies' prevents the larger Unions 'from doing anything which would provide food for internal dissension'.[1] Moreover, under conditions of full employment, workers tend to be more militant and the size of their unions is less important to their bargaining power.

Speaking generally, the establishment of breakaway Unions from time to time reflects the feeling that the established Trade Unions are failing to fulfil one or other of their functions. Breakaway Unions are correspondingly varied in their appeal. They may be established on the basis of an appeal to rank-and-file militancy, as was the old General Railway Workers' Union of 1889,[2] or the Building Workers' Industrial Union (set up on the eve of the first world war under the inspiration of Tom Mann); they may, since they are usually not recognized by employers and are thus not burdened with the expenses of negotiation, be able to provide unusual or specially attractive benefit schemes, such as a provision for mortgage payments on workers' homes; they may—as was originally the Steel Smelters' Union—be no more than new organizations established to prevent sectional interests being swamped or ignored. Breakaways have appeared in a number of industries during the present century; for example in building, shipping,[3] Post Office telephones, aircraft maintenance,[4] coal mining, clothing and road transport. Breakaway Unionism is of course not important by comparison with the established Unions; the breakaways have generally not survived for very long, nor perhaps is it desirable that they should. Sometimes, like the 'rank-and-file' movements from which they occasionally spring, they have been set up under the influence of interested political bodies; but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Two militant breakaway Unions may be mentioned here. The National Union of Colliery Winding Enginemen was formed in January 1947 by members of various organizations, some of which had already detached themselves from the enginemen's and craftsmen's associations which became incorporated in the National Union of Mineworkers.[5] The breakaway body was subjected to

[1] H. W. SINGER, *Wage Policy in Full Employment, Economic Journal* (December 1947).

[2] This Union aimed at organizing the unskilled workers who had been neglected by the A.S.R.S.; it passed out of existence with the formation of the N.U.R. (See COLE and ARNOT, *Trade Unionism on the Railways* (1917), p. 16).

[3] The British Sea-Farers' Union broke away from the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union in October 1911 (see T.U.C. *Report* for 1913).

[4] The long struggle to organize ground staffs at civil air bases, who were regarded as dilutees by the A.E.U., resulted in the formation in 1943 of the Aeronautical Engineers' Association.

[5] After the formation of the N.U.C.W.E. in 1947, it was joined by the Cannock Chase and Pelsall C.W.E. Association (itself a breakaway dating from 1921), the South Wales and Monmouthshire C.W.E.A. (which had had an independent agreement with the Coal Board), and later by the Yorks. C.W.E.A. (which broke away from the N.U.M. and formed the nucleus of yet another organization, the Colliery Winders' Federation of Great Britain). See *N.U.M. Annual Reports* for 1948 and 1949.

considerable opposition by the N.U.M. and found difficulty in recruiting; 'for the same reason a number of their members were continuing to pay subscriptions to the National Union of Mineworkers'.[1] Eventually, after trying without success to get recognition from the National Coal Board, the breakaway Union was tactless enough to time a demonstration strike in Durham to coincide with the institution of the miner's five-day week. This ('official') strike was at once castigated by the miners' leaders as a stab in the back and a 'dastardly outrage', and was quickly broken with the help of the N.U.M. itself. The local *Sunderland Echo and Shipping Gazette* (May 9th, 1947) sardonically expressed the hope that the miners would 'have done with unofficial lightning strikes', since 'the Union has set a precedent in strike-breaking, of which they will be promptly reminded if and when there should be another stoppage by any body of miners'.

The breakaway Union claimed, however, that it had become stronger in the north-east as a result of the strike, and professed itself ready to undertake a national strike if necessary. Eventually the matter went to a Court of Inquiry, which, while it could not recommend the Coal Board to recognize the breakaway Union as a separate negotiating body, insisted that the N.U.M. should 'include among their representatives persons regarded by the winding enginemen themselves as competent to represent their special interests'. Thus this breakaway Union had come into existence, not at the behest of political agitators or in defiance of official policy as such, but simply to secure adequate representation of the men's interests.[2]

A more famous breakaway was the National Passenger Workers' Union, whose formation dated from the 'Coronation' strike of some 12,800 London bus drivers and 12,700 conductors in 1937. The background was as follows. Before January 1st, 1922 (the date of the creation of the Transport and General Workers' Union), London busmen were catered for by the United Vehicle Workers' Union — which was itself an amalgamation of two Unions.[3] The 1919 agreement between this Union and the (then) London General Omnibus Company, establishing the eight-hour day, was won by considerable struggle, and was regarded by many workers as the best the industry had enjoyed; but some of its clauses were forfeited as the result of later developments. When in the course of time buses grew larger, standing or rest time was curtailed, the number of passengers increased disproportionately to the number of buses, the speed limit was raised from twenty to thirty m.p.h., and wage reductions were imposed, dissatisfaction developed within the Union and a rank-and-file movement arose as a 'ginger group' to combat worsening conditions.[4] Further complaints arose from speeding-up and the too frequent alteration of schedules, 'spreadovers' and the irregularity of meal times, lowered earnings, promotion

[1] *Report of Court of Inquiry* (House of Commons paper, January 28th, 1948), p. 10.

[2] For the circumstances of the original formation of the Durham enginemen's Union, see Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, pp. 125-6, and Jevons, *The British Coal Trade* (1915), pp. 477-8.

[3] London busmen were first organized in 1913, in the Licensed and Provincial Union (the 'Red Button' Union, which had a reputation for militancy). In 1920 this Union joined with the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen to form the United Vehicle Workers' Union.

[4] For details of the deterioration in conditions, see the T. & G.W.U. *Record*, May 1937.

and redundancy questions, the inadequacy of standing times and of facilities at terminal points, the effects of petrol 'fumes', and so on; and the strain on the workers was said to be evidenced by persistent gastric troubles among the drivers.[1]

After 1933 an unofficial strike movement developed; but considering the severity of the 1937 strike, the movement was not very strong. The *Annual Reports* of the L.P.T.B. listed one strike in 1934 (of one day), three in 1935 (described as 'short'), and five in 1936 ('speedily settled'). Nor do there seem to have been other overt signs of discontent: a Communist Party pamphlet[2] published after the 1937 strike stated that 1459 busmen left the service during the five years ending 1935 for reasons other than ill health, retirement or death — which would represent an annual leaving rate, including dismissals, of less than one per cent. (During the same period, according to the pamphlet, 877 busmen died, 343 retired, and 1006 were discharged through ill health.) That discontent existed, however, is evident enough, if only from the strength of the Rank-and-File Movement. The innumerable complaints expressed in *Busman's Punch* were pruned down, and ultimately the demand was put forward for plenary powers to strike for a seven-hour day — the demand being later reduced to that of a seven-and-a-half-hour day. The strike eventually took place, but was called off by the T. & G.W.U. Executive in three weeks.[3]

The strikers had been informed by broadcast that the strike was over, and were ordered back to work on pain of dismissal. Many were in fact kept on strike for a further week by their leaders. After the strike a strong campaign against the Rank-and-File Movement was set on foot within the Union,[4] and this was endorsed by the Union's biennial Conference. Some members of the rank-and-file leadership were expelled, and others were suspended from holding executive positions for a period; and it took several months of resistance for any of these sentences to be modified. Meanwhile — against the decision, by a narrow majority, of the last meeting of the Rank-and-File Committee — a breakaway Union was formed under the honorary presidency of Mr. W. J. Brown, secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, who had offered his services immediately after the strike.

A Gilbertian duel then developed between Mr. W. J. Brown and Mr. Bevin. On February 24th, 1938, it was announced that committee members of the breakaway National Passenger Workers' Union had met at the C.S.C.A. offices.[5] On the 25th, Mr. Bevin was reported as stating that some members of the C.S.C.A., objecting to their President's activities, had approached him to sponsor a corresponding breakaway from the C.S.C.A.[6] By March 12th, the Executive Council of the T. & G.W.U. were said to have voted 'a substantial sum of money'

[1] The eventual inquiries into this question were inconclusive. See *An Investigation into the Sickness Experience of London Transport Workers, with Special Reference to Digestive Disturbances*, by A. Bradford Hill (*Industrial Health Research Board Report*, No. 79, 1937); and *The Health of London Busmen* (Ministry of Labour, 1939).

[2] *The London Bus Strike: What Next? Our Reply to Mr. Bevin.*

[3] For a full account of these events see Clegg, *Labour Relations in London Transport* (1950).

[4] *Busman's Punch*, the organ of the movement, continued irregularly until November 1937.

[5] *Daily Telegraph* (February 24th, 1938).

[6] *News Chronicle* (March 12th, 1938).

to prosecute a campaign among civil servants, but to have 'withheld their hand' pending 'further consideration' being given to the matter by the C.S.C.A. The C.S.C.A. replied with dignity that their Union, as such, was not involved and that they resented the threat of 'invasion' by Mr. Bevin: 'the Civil Service Clerical Association is not Austria.'[1] The tumult died; the National Passenger Workers' Union survived, but remained small.[2]

It claimed, indeed, to be increasing its influence up to the war, but soon had to fight hard for its existence. In 1942 it carried a case to the Lords,[3] in the attempt to assert the right of its members to be represented by their own officials in disciplinary cases. In 1946 however, the repeal of the 1927 Trades Disputes Act (which under section 6 had forbidden public bodies to establish a closed shop) made possible an agreement between London Transport and the T. & G.W.U. that only T. & G.W.U. members should be employed on London's buses and trams.[4] The breakaway Union issued no less that thirty-nine writs in the attempt to restrain London Transport from carrying out the agreement; but it failed. Most N.P.W.U. members joined the T. & G.W.U.; dual membership was not forbidden, but the breakaway body was broken and soon dissolved. 'This struggle has cost us every penny,' said Mr. Payne, one of its officials: 'I am afraid you will have to ask the High Court to discharge our writs. I would like to have fought it out . . . but it's no use . . . Let's face it, our Union is broke . . . In 1945 we had 8000 members and about £4000. At our last check-up a few weeks ago we had about six regularly paying members and £4 13s. in the bank. We lost our members because they got fired or had to change over to the big union, and we spent our money trying to fight the closed-shop and in having writs prepared. We have sold everything we could.' But the fighting spirit died hard. Payne was prepared to carry on voluntarily: 'Tell 'em Bill Payne is still on the job — and the union carries on'.[5]

Perhaps the most impressive thing about breakaway Unionism is its stubbornness. When, in June 1947, the House of Lords debated an amendment to the Transport Bill to provide that the Transport Commission should not make it a condition of employment that a man should be a member of a particular Trade

[1] *The Times* (March 14th, 1938).

[2] The N.P.W.U. never claimed a membership of much more than 4,000 in London. 'Nearly all the members of the N.P.W.U. were middle-aged men with long records of conducting and driving so their reasons for membership were rarely capricious though sometimes very personal. Most of them had been members of the Vehicle Workers' Union and of the T. & G.W.U. until the 1937 strike. . . The most duplicated criticism was of the inefficiency and slowness of official union negotiations' (PORT and CROMBIE, *Closed Shop, Pilot Papers*, vol. II, No. 3, pp. 61-2).

[3] *Moscrop v. L.P.T.B.* For an account of the case, see the T. & G.W.U. *Record* for February 1942.

[4] When the T. & G.W.U. officially intimated to the L.P.T.B. that their members would no longer work with non-members, the L.P.T.B. had been maintaining, for 3 months, 12 N.P.W.U. tramwaymen on their payroll without allowing them to work—since the rest of the depot staff had already refused to work with them. The N.P.W.U. tried (unsuccessfully) to secure an injunction against their dismissal on the grounds that, by an existing T. & G.W.U./L.P.T.B. agreement, men should be dismissed only in view of misconduct, ill health, old age, or the need to reduce staff. Mr. Justice Wynn Parry, giving judgment, said that in any case 'the Court must look at the matter broadly and would generally consider it much better not to interfere' (*The Times*, September 20th, 1946).

[5] *Daily Express* (June 4th, 1947). Less than a year later a fresh breakaway Union on the same lines was reported from Salford, Lancashire: the National Union of Public Vehicle Drivers and Conductors (*Daily Express*, May 10th, 1948).

Union, Lord Walkden — an ex-president of the T.U.C. — roundly damned all dissenters:

> 'Sometimes a non-unionist thinks he has a conscience,[1] but it is an inflated ego. He has a queer mind. There were some strange bodies — queer, peculiar people — and those which were found most awkward were the Christadelphians, and one he believed was called the Plymouth Rocks'— but 'the wrong-unionist was the worst man.'

The 'wrong Union' in question was the National Passenger Workers' Union. 'I have been asked', wrote a contributor to the *Observer*[2] who refused to abandon this Union and had lost his job — at the age of sixty — in consequence, 'why I would not rejoin the T. & G.W.U., knowing that the alternative was dismissal.'

> 'Well, I was a member of that organization for 20 years. I saw it degenerate from a union to improve the workers' conditions into a machine to finance its leaders' political ambitions. Now the leaders are in the saddle, with four-figure incomes, and they are striving to gain control of everything and everybody . . . I agree that a union makes for better contact between workers and employers, but I cannot see the sense of belonging to a vast political machine which collects contributions from millions [*sic*] of workers belonging to over 50 different trades. . . If the "Little Union" members had followed the T. & G.W.U. tactics and struck for recognition they would be going strong now; but owing to the apathy of the majority of busmen the T. & G.W.U. and the L.P.T.B. were allowed to gain the day. The prodigals were welcomed back to the fold — on payment of fines up to £5. So the closed shop reigns in London Transport, and the fares were raised in celebration thereof.'

The answer is fairly characteristic of the 'wrong-Unionist' standpoint, and the feeling that the strike is the only effective means of securing sectional interests.

The drive for the 'closed shop' as an answer to breakaway Unionism.

> 'We might as well have a live cat in our belly as live with union men and not join the union.'
>
> Quoted in Clifford, *The Agricultural Lock-Out* (1875).

The answer of the established Unions to breakaway Unionism has been a renewal of the drive for what is loosely called a 'closed shop', and in 1946-47 it proved very effective.

Samuel Gompers, in *The Federationist*, traced the term 'closed shop' to a 1903 Conference of Employers' Associations at New Orleans — where, he maintained, it had been coined with malicious ingenuity to associate the idea of 100 per cent Trade Unionism with unfree enterprise.[3] Mr. Isaacs, when Minister

[1] Similarly the *Wool Working Party Report* (1947, p. 163) noted that the only exceptions to 100 per cent membership of the Swedish textile workers' Union were 'some women who have religious objections to joining such a movement together with other improvident girls who prefer to spend their money elsewhere'. Foolish virgins, indeed.

[2] August 3rd, 1947.

[3] See *Pilot Papers*, vol. II, No. 3, loc. cit. This article traces closed shop practice from a putative ancestry in a Royal Rule of 1363, establishing a Guild 'closed shop', through its more authentic background in the Industrial Revolution and up to the present day.

of Labour, referred to the closed shop as 'an American term which has been imported into this country for the purpose of causing trouble to the Government'. But the closed shop in its broadest colloquial sense has, in essence if not in name, a more venerable history than this. The Webbs, in their *Industrial Democracy*, exploded as early as 1897 the 'strange delusion in the journalistic mind' that compulsory Trade Unionism was 'a modern device'. In fact, the 1912 T.U.C. resolution,

> 'that in the interests of trade unionism, and with a view to securing the full benefits of awards and agreements fought for and obtained by trade unionists, the Congress is of the opinion that the time has arrived when trade unionists should refuse to work with non-unionists,'

merely endorsed a practice as old as Trade Unionism itself. Today, however, the term 'closed shop' is coming to mean more than the exclusion of non-Unionists; it is now possible to write of 'the closed shop as the logical method of ensuring the maintenance of 100 per cent T.U.C. unionism', and conversely of 'the "Free" union as the only rallying point for opposition to official T.U.C. policy'.[1]

It is true that the T.U.C. itself has never approved the closed shop in the American sense of a one-Union shop,[2] since this would involve inter-Union struggles which could not be resolved by a pronouncement of the T.U.C. Disputes Committee.[3] But it favours the '100-per-cent-Union shop' — the Unions being those approved by the T.U.C. and by such employing bodies as may follow its lead.

Thus British Trade Unionism falls into three categories: (i) the T.U.C.-affiliated Unions; (ii) those other '*bona fide*' Unions which, though not affiliated to the T.U.C., are nevertheless recognized by it — such Unions, for example, as N.A.L.G.O., with which the T.U.C. has been fully associated for many years in various activities, the teachers' Unions, and others; and (iii) the unaffiliated and unrecognized Unions, including the breakaways — a grouping which, allegedly to the strength of some 45 unions and 400,000 members in 1946, became linked in the 'Federation of Independent Trade Unions'.[4] The official attitude is (i) that there is by now no field for Union organization which cannot

[1] *Pilot Papers*, loc. cit., pp. 57-9.

[2] In Britain the term 'closed shop' is used loosely, as equivalent to 100 per cent Trade Union membership. In the U.S.A., a 'closed shop' strictly means that the employer cannot employ workers who are not already Union members; a 'Union shop' means that all workers employed must become Union members within a certain time; while a third variant, 'maintenance of employment', was established during the second world war – employers undertaking to see that existing Union membership was maintained.

[3] As it was, getting on for 200 inter-Union disputes were mentioned in Congress reports as having been submitted to the Disputes Committee between the two wars.

[4] *Daily Telegraph* Industrial Correspondent (August 31st, 1946). Wildly divergent estimates were made of the strength, actual or prospective, of the F.I.T.U. Unions mentioned in connection with its inaugural conference included the National Passenger Workers' Union, the Independent Road Transport Workers' Association, the National Association of Women Civil Servants, the Press Photographers' Association, the Inventors' Union, the Union of Railway Signalmen, the National Union of Aircraft Workers, the Electricity Supply Workers' Association, the Engineering Craftsmen's Guild, the National Federation of Operative Painters, the Ulster Transport and Allied Operatives' Union, the Amalgamated Steam Trawler Engineers' and Firemen's Union, and the Green Badge Taxicab Drivers' Union (*Manchester Guardian*, July 1st, 1946). But the eruption of breakaway unionism soon spent its force.

properly be claimed by existing Unions, (ii) that the existing Unions are in any case too numerous to be efficient, and (iii) that employers can therefore use these upstart Unions, even when their intentions are honourable and they carry no taint of Company Unionism, as catspaws against the *bona fide* Unions. Thus the drive for closed shops has somewhat changed its character — and the stronger and larger the Union, the more it can afford to fight for the closed shop on the American model.[1] The appeal to streamlined organization and to trouble-saving in general has proved so cogent to an overburdened Trade Union bureaucracy that counter-arguments based on appeals to personal freedom[2] have done little to arrest the course of events.

True, appeals to Freedom are often disingenuous. As Mr. Ness Edwards pointed out, some people who had professed concern about compulsory Trade Union membership had shown no such squeamishness about the enforcement of Company Union membership or dismissal for Trade Union membership. Yet, in the words of a *Times* correspondent (September 6th, 1946), if the 'monopoly shop' is generally established, it is possible that 'the shops will become even more unwieldy, more time will be lost in settling disputes, and unofficial strikes will flourish as never before'.

Most compelling is the suggestion that the Unions are in danger of being drawn into a position where they cease to command the voluntary allegiance of their members:

> 'if in the last resort a man can leave his union with a chance of finding work, the official leaders must always have in mind the necessity to meet his needs. If he has no escape, it may well increase the temptation to undemocratic leadership, of which some already complain.'[3]

Moreover, as the *Economist*[4] has pointed out, the closed shop is not a convenience to unions alone:

> 'The employer, once he is fully reconciled to dealing with trade unions, finds it convenient to deal with one union, particularly if its officials, being protected against "breakaway" tactics by dissident minorities in its membership, can afford to be reasonable.'[5]

[1] In 1939 the U.S.A. *Bureau of Labor Statistics* reported that more than half of some 7,000 current Union agreements on file with the Bureau included provisions that all employees be members of the Unions in question. In 1939 about 3 million, and by 1941 4 million workers were covered by closed shop contracts (a figure which excludes many workers – e.g. railwaymen – working under virtually closed shop conditions) i.e. about 12 per cent of all U.S.A. wage-earners.

[2] SPIELMANS, in *The Dilemma of the Closed Shop*, *Journal of Political Economy* (April 1943), quotes some entertaining examples of U.S.A. congressional oratory, fully paralleled in the British Press, on this aspect of the matter.

[3] *The Times* (August 28th, 1946). 'There is no doubt', wrote a careful observer concerning compulsory Unionism in New Zealand, 'that the union secretary is inevitably deteriorating into a mere collector of union dues and has become a hated person in many quarters amongst the workers, where before he would have been regarded by non-members as a friend and adviser in time of need. There is an extensive and freely expressed hatred of the unions amongst ordinary working men and women . . . which none who makes inquiries can ignore' (HARE, *Industrial Relations in New Zealand* (1946), p. 198).

[4] October 26th, 1946.

[5] Professor Sumner Slichter has argued that in American experience the employer is likely to have more freedom in a closed shop or its equivalent than where the Union is uncertain of its status – having found from an examination of some 300 closed shop agree-

Government Departments and public corporations also find it a convenience; indeed, continued the *Economist*,

> 'it does not require a long look at the theory of the closed shop, as a general proposition, to make the discovery that it is the corporative state. If there are differences between the T.U.C.-F.B.I. doctrine and Mussolini's fancy scheme, they are relatively minor. It is not even possible to maintain, without a touch of humbug, that the British way is democratic while the Italian way is dictatorial. The hierarchy of the Transport and General Workers' Union, to take only one example, depends at least as much upon appointment from above as on election from below,[1] and in what sense of the word is the Iron and Steel Federation a model of democracy?'

Many would reject this judgment; and it is true that the 'closed shop', in its contemporary British form, is quite in line with Trade Union development. But while it obviously represents an organizational advance, it might, under other conditions, prove a political handicap — particularly if the membership were less in sympathy with official canons of orthodoxy, or if an unscrupulous Government came to power. It is in this light that breakaway Unions, although numerically quite unimportant, are not necessarily an unhealthy check on development. Moreover, their very emergence calls attention to defects in existing Trade Union organization.

Government — even Labour Government — policy on the 'closed shop' is less definite than that of the T.U.C. In 1946, the Postmaster-General rejected a claim by the Union of Post Office Workers[2] to be regarded as the only Staff association entitled to negotiate with the Post Office on behalf of the lower manipulative grades, and insisted that it would not be right

> 'to withdraw recognition from the smaller bodies merely for the sake of removing the difficulty. It would not be just . . . to ignore the views of responsible and properly constituted minority bodies having in membership a large proportion of the organized staff in the grades which they seek to represent.'[3]

Moreover, with the reintroduction of the Control of Engagement Order in October 1947, the Minister of Labour showed himself prepared to respect objections — conscientious or other — to Trade Unionism to the extent of refusing to direct workers to a 'closed shop' factory unless they were willing to join the Union concerned.

[1] The only officer of the T. & G.W.U. elected by ballot of the membership is the General Secretary; the others are appointed by the General Executive after an examination. See *The Times* (September 6th, 1946): *A Labour Storm-Centre: The Transport and General Workers' Union.*

[2] The U.P.W., in its struggle against breakaway Unionism, at one time allowed the whole Whitley machinery for the Post Office to be suspended rather than admit a breakaway body to which the authorities wanted to give representation.

[3] *The Times* (December 31st, 1946). The Postmaster-General has since specified a 40 per cent membership as requisite. The Treasury's attitude is similar, although no precise percentage is specified.

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ments that only 54 per cent of these included restrictions on the employer's freedom to lay off, while 86 per cent of open shop agreements included such restrictions. (See also *Monthly Labour Review* (October 1939), p. 830; Lester, *Economics of Labor* (New York, 1947), p. 621.)

Outside influences within the Unions

'Bolshies here have Russian Bolshies striving to incite 'em,
Russian Bolshies German Bolshies — so *ad infinitum*.'

Cole, *Chaos and Order in Industry* (1920), p. 5.

'The idea they endeavour to foster is that these evil-disposed, designing "agitators" were so cunning, so seductive, that they were able to lead some hundreds of thousands of contented workmen by the nose, and to induce them to come out on strike against their best interests and against conditions which in themselves were all that could be desired.'

H. Quelch, Introduction to Ben Tillett, *History of the London Transport Workers' Strike*, 1911, p. iii.

Strikers have often been accused of being the agents or tools of the political enemies of those who are embarrassed by them. In the early nineteenth century, strikes were held to be the work of Radical agitators; in 1842, O'Connor insisted that the big Lancashire strikes had been engineered by the Anti-Corn Law League; and campaigns against 'disruptive elements' are a familiar feature of Trade Union history. In 1889 Henry Broadhurst, a Gladstonian Liberal hostile to the militant Socialists of the day, attacked, in his speeches to the Dundee Trades Union Congress, 'those who spread dissensions in the Unions, and seek to destroy unionism by vehemently attacking its prominent representatives'; 'the new enemies have learned the serpent's wisdom, and make their attacks in detail. Their emissaries enter our camp in the guise of friends, in order that they may the better sow the seeds of disruption. Let the workers beware of them' and 'hound these creatures from our midst'.[1] During the present century, much the same has been felt about Syndicalism and Communism — movements which have, however, been more highly organized than their forbears. The ramification of other organizations within the Trade Unions has affected the attitude of some of their members to strikes, although probably to a smaller extent hitherto than in other countries.

Syndicalism was introduced into the South Wales coalfield after the failure of the Cambrian Combine strikes of 1910-11. It developed quickly; the Syndicalist 'Industrial Union' claimed some 60,000 members before the end of 1911 and was said in 1912 to have been increasing rapidly.[2] It was assumed that the Syndicalists were responsible for the 1912 coal strike and other big strikes of the pre-war period; Mr. Lloyd George, however, who claimed to have been 'in close touch with most of the big strikes',[3] thought otherwise. 'I do not believe', he said, 'that Syndicalism is a real peril . . . I cannot see men of very great weight in the Labour movement who have committed themselves to it.' It had little hold on the mass of Trade Unionists: 'I have seen the striker; I have seen the leaders of the strike, but their position has not been the Syndicalist position. After all, the demand for a minimum wage' (in the 1912 coal strike) 'is not a Syndicalist demand.' Again, revolutionary movements of industrial workers were nothing new: 'to treat this as if it were a portent, as if it were something that had appeared for the first time in the history of this country, is a mistake'.

[1] T.U.C. *Report* (1889), pp. 14, 30.
[2] Lord Robert Cecil, March 19th, 1912 (*Hansard*, vol. XXV, 1766).
[3] *Hansard*, ibid. (1775-77).

Moreover, Syndicalism and Socialism were 'mutually destructive': 'the best policeman for the Syndicalist is the Socialist'; 'there is this guarantee for society, that one microbe can be trusted to kill another, and the microbe of Socialism, which may be a very beneficent one, does at any rate keep guard upon the other, which is a very dangerous and perilous one. I have, therefore, no real fear of the Syndicalist.'[1]

Lloyd George's estimate was not, of course, characteristic. In general the feeling about the Syndicalists then was not unlike the reaction to the Communists later. Both have been believed to be uniquely responsible for strikes; both have been castigated in Trades Union Congresses as 'disruptive elements'; both have been credited with influence beyond their numbers.

The Communist attitude to strikes derives from the general principle that they are always justifiable in a society dominated by the bourgeoisie. (The only qualifications are those of 'world proletarian strategy' as interpreted in the light of Soviet interests; thus strikes were improper in Britain if they impeded the war effort while Britain was allied with the U.S.S.R.) Conversely, of course, despite the retention of the right to strike in the U.S.S.R., strikes are unjustifiable if they take place in a society where the proletariat, or those claiming to represent it, are in power: 'to strike against the bourgeoisie is the sacred right of the proletariat in its fight against the exploiters. To strike against the workers' revolution is an act of hostility against the working class and is therefore a crime against Russian and international socialism. The strikes of the bourgeoisie and the backward sections of the workers against the proletariat and its authority will never be permitted by the Trade Unions. This was the first lesson of the October Revolution.'[2] Communists have, of course, hardly been the first to insist on class warfare as the *raison d'être* of labour movements, nor have they been the first to justify even unsuccessful strikes as battle-training for revolution; what distinguishes them from previous militant bodies is the existence of Soviet Russia as the focus of their loyalty and as the touchstone of workers' interests.

The following summary, mainly from Communist sources, indicates the extent of the influence claimed or admitted at various times.

The atmosphere of Trade Union militancy after the first world war was favourable to Communism, and there was said to be 'a very strong Communist fraction which was able to lead and carry the Congresses with it on fundamental issues'[3] in 1924 and 1925. Yet the Communist Party was very small (about 5000 strong early in 1926, though its membership is said to have temporarily doubled during that year), and had little mass influence.[4] It is true that the Minority

[1] Similarly it was argued in 1947 that 'if you want to fight the communist, select the socialist to be your advance guard; because he knows the character of his enemy and his operation, and the conservative doesn't' (Leo Cherne, Executive Secretary to the Research Institute of America, *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* (March 6th, 1947)).

[2] *Trade Unions in Soviet Russia* (1920), a collection of documents by the I.L.P. and the Labour Research Department, pp. 18-19.

[3] H. Pollitt, *Labour Monthly* (October 1930).

[4] This isolation was admitted, and is in any case evident by implication: witness the idealized picture of the Revolutionary Trade Union Engineer after the 1922 lockout (Lawrence, *Revolutionary Unionism in the Engineering Trades, Labour Monthly*, April 1923): 'he is a man of superior skill to his predecessor of a generation ago, but, unlike him, he is contemptuous of any pride or delight in the exercise of his skill. He has no intention of placing his full capabilities at his employer's service; he does the work allotted to him, mechanically, but with consummate ease, with his mind all the time upon other things.

Movement, launched in August 1924 on the basis of the rank-and-file and 'vigilance' movements of the immediate post-war period, claimed[1] to speak for some 200,000 Trade Unionists in 1924, and as many as 957,000 (nearly one-third of the T.U.C.-affiliated membership) in 1925; but before 1926 it acted merely as a 'ginger' movement to canalize a militancy which was already general. The *British Gazette* (May 13th, 1926) suggested, indeed, that the General Strike had been engineered from Russia, and reprinted, as evidence, a German business man's letter to a French paper:

> 'Russia has prepared carefully for the English strike for a long while, though the Trade Union leaders did not know that for the most part they were playing the game of the Kremlin and thought that they were merely defending the economic interests of the working class. While England is in the grip of a general strike, the German Nationalists were to be provoked into a war with Poland. As part of the same plan the various native races under European Government were to have been stirred into rebellion against their European rulers.'

The baying of a 'restless [Muscovite] hound' was also perceived by the *Daily Telegraph* as early as May 8th, and even earlier in other journals.[2] Communism, according to Dr. Shadwell (*The Times*, January 22nd, 1927) was particularly strong in South Wales and Durham — a verdict apparently based on the failure of workers in these areas to contract out of paying the political levy. Even so, at the end of 1929 *The Times* (December 2nd) put the Party's membership at no more than 2000: 900 in the London area, and the rest mainly in Newcastle, Scotland and South Wales.

After the debacle of 1926, Communists were hard put to it to check the ebb of militancy: they continued to demand — in vain — a Workers' Defence Corps, a permanent Trade Union and Co-operative Alliance ('who feeds the people wins the strike! The problem of the general strike can be focused down to one thing — the struggle for food control'[3]), stronger Trades Councils, and rank-and-file committees everywhere — the aim being to organize further massive strikes (another general strike to defeat the Trade Disputes Bill was demanded, for example) in defiance of the Trade Union leadership. 'Independent revolu-

[1] See A. Hutt, *Post-War History of the British Working Class* (1937), p. 93; Arnot, *The General Strike* (1926), p. 110f.

[2] See Kingsley Martin, *The British Public and the General Strike* (1926), p. 28n. Dr. Shadwell, in the course of a series of *Times* articles in September 1925, wrote that he was 'constantly confronted with the theory' that Communist agitation was 'wholly due to the machinations of a secret society which was founded in 1776 for the destruction of Western civilization and has been the hidden source of all revolutionary risings ever since, beginning with the great French Revolution and ending (so far) with Bolshevism . . . the idea of some awful secret force working for evil possesses a great fascination for some minds'.

[3] *Labour Monthly* (June 1926), quoting from the programme of a Council of Action. W. Gallacher and J. R. Campbell had already considered the question of strikers' food supplies. Their pamphlet on *Direct Action* published in December 1919 appealed for Union organization based on workshop committees, for the discarding of sectional strikes and strike pay, and for the setting up of a Social Committee to organize food supplies and the billeting of strikers' children.

The basic principle of his everyday thought is the problem of getting rid of his capitalist employer; getting him out of the workshop, once and for all . . . Higher wages, improved conditions, are all very well in their way, but amount only to a little more gilt on his chains.' (!)

tionary Unions' (the United Mineworkers of Scotland and the United Clothing Workers' Union) were formed, and the Minority Movement and the Communist Party claimed credit for a number of unofficial strikes during the years following 1926: 'the field of strike strategy and tactics represents the decisive testing ground for the ability of the Minority Movement to win the leadership of the masses . . . very few strikes are "spontaneous" in the full sense of the word; there must be some leading group and the Minority Movement must see to it that the leadership is ours.'[1] The organization of the unemployed, and their enlistment as pickets in strikes, was also undertaken under Communist guidance (as well as by the T.U.C.): and they showed their mettle more than once by refusing to act as blacklegs.

Nevertheless it seems clear that the influence of the Minority movement was strictly limited. In the furnishing trades, continued *Labour Monthly*, 'the Minority Movement has not yet succeeded in gaining real leadership in the factories'; on the railways 'the test of action has not yet been endured by this section'; in clothing, the United Clothing Workers' Union 'has as yet been utterly unable to gain leadership or a basis in the factories'; when wages were cut in the building trade 'the Committee of Action failed to get a strike', and there was 'confusion and weakness on the whole question of the new line'; among the dockers there was 'no Communist cell and no Rank-and-File trade union movement'. In 1929, on the occasion of the textile lockout, the Movement was pronounced 'weak'; and again three years later[2] 'the work within the' (cotton textile) 'Unions, which, on occasions has been of a more effective character than has been experienced in any other industry, has suffered from an inability to go beyond a certain very definite stage in the fight against the officials . . . there has been a tendency to play into the hands of the "left" elements of social reformism' (i.e. the non-Communist militants) '. . . the comrades carried the work to a very high stage' but 'it was just at this stage that our comrades proved unable to cope with the situation and left the matter to the wiles of the lefts'. Communists had made an 'indiscriminate use of the "Strike Now" slogan', but the militants of the rank-and-file movements, though rebellious, were stubbornly unrevolutionary: 'it is clear that the great majority of the workers who form these movements are not yet won for the revolutionary platform of the Red International of Labour Unions and its British section, the National Minority Movement.' As regards the accusation of disruptive tactics, 'it is true . . .

[1] Mahon, *Strike Experience of the Minority Movement*, *Labour Monthly* (July 1930). The fact that the Minority Movement was extremely vocal gave the Trade Union leadership an exaggerated picture of its influence. For example, in a small unofficial strike of Barking busmen in 1929, Mr. Bevin wired to the strikers that 'literature now issued proves conclusively that the stoppage is a Minority Movement stunt'; but after meeting a delegation of busmen he withdrew the allegation unreservedly. (See *The Times*, October 7th and 11th, 1929.)

[2] For three weeks the *Daily Worker* devoted its back page entirely to the cotton workers' strike of September 1932; but the actual isolation of the Communists was apparent from a sharp criticism which had appeared in the issue of April 1st of that year: 'our Party organization in Burnley had not made any preparations for the coming struggle. The organization was so isolated from the workers that it had not the slightest idea of the strong fighting spirit of the masses. Not a single comrade believed in the possibility of a strike, and even less in a strike led by us.' Members would declare ' " the C.P.G.B. *is* the leader of the workers' struggle" . . . many of our comrades limited their activity to shouting "we are the leaders" . . . Only some time after the strike did our comrades understand that our proposals in regard to trade union opposition must have a concrete content and a concrete platform.'

that in the past, a few young and over-exuberant self-styled Communists, did adopt such tactics, with harmful results to the Trade Union movement'; but the fact that disruptive tactics were at all times disclaimed by the Communists and attributed to them by the official Trade Union leadership indicates the real hold exercised in the last resort by the Unions even on their militants.[1]

These quotations from *Labour Monthly*, covering the decade following the General Strike, are fairly characteristic. The Minority Movement, in fact, ceased to exist from 1932, and a post-mortem on it was held at the seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935. At this congress Mr. J. R. Campbell emphasized that the policy of relentless opposition to Trade Union officials at all levels had completely isolated the Movement,[2] but that rank-and-file movements offered better prospects. The Minority Movement, he said, had appeared to dictate to the Trade Unions from outside, but the new rank-and-file movement was 'a grouping of the militant branches and shop stewards springing out of the growing life of the Unions themselves and expressing all the militant and progressive tendencies of the rank-and-file'. The Minority Movement had been too sectarian, 'a movement of close Communist sympathizers'; it 'appeared as an alternative apparatus to that of the Unions', which enabled 'the bureaucracy' to 'raise the question of loyalty and isolate militants'. Not that rank-and-file movements obviated the necessity for 'independent leadership' — on the contrary; but 'it is absolutely necessary for independent leadership to have the powerful support of the lower organs of the Trade Union Movement'. Campbell gave figures of Party membership: out of 7700 members, only 1010 were members of factory cells; and the factory cells numbered 174, as against 97 in the year previous (1934).

Campbell had said that it was 'exceptionally difficult' to build an organization in the factories in 1930-32; and even after the Communist attitude to the Union leadership had been modified, it remained uphill work. Transport House was certainly not appeased by the new line of the Communist International, nor by the annual applications of the Communist Party for affiliation to the Labour Party. However, towards the end of the depression and at the beginning of the rearmament boom, when the Bedaux[3] system was being introduced into a

[1] After 1926, the T.U.C. initiated a full inquiry into the activities of 'disruptive elements', of which a report was presented to the 1929 Congress. 92 Trade Unions, however, stated that they had had no experience of disruption; and of 32 which admitted that they had been troubled in this way, only 8 said that it had been 'serious' – though others were said not to have replied so as not to give publicity to the Minority Movement. Complaints, however, were made that unofficial strikes had been fostered by 'disruptive elements', particularly in mining, clothing, and distribution.

[2] *The Communist International*, vol. XII, No. 16 (August 20th, 1935), printed the speeches of the British delegates. Mr. P. Kerrigan, in illustration of the isolation of the Minority Movement, quoted from a 1931 pamphlet of the wool textile workers' Minority Movement. The pamphlet insisted that the employers' demands could be defeated only by strike action, 'and the strike action must be prepared for and carried out independently of the trade union machine'. Indeed, the only reference to the Unions in the five slogans which ended the pamphlet was the cry: 'Into the Trade Union branches to smash the reactionaries.'(!)

[3] The Bedaux Company in 1932 reported 50,000 workers in 32 undertakings as employed under the system; and a T.U.C. inquiry reported that the main industries concerned were chemicals, food, iron and steel, engineering, textiles and hosiery (*Bedaux*, T.U.C., June 1933). Three years later, 240 firms were said to be operating the system, which was not 'meeting the militant opposition so characteristic of the institution of the system three or four years ago' (*Labour Research*, June 1936).

number of factories, there was an increase in militancy which was more favourable to Communist agitation; 'the atmosphere', wrote *Labour Monthly* in June 1934, 'in all the main factories at the time of the Lucas strike was such that had there been Communists in them it would have been the easiest thing to have extended the strike to all factories in Birmingham.' Not only in the Lucas strike, but in those at the Firestone tyre works and the Ford Motor Company in London, at the Pressed Steel works at Cowley, and elsewhere, Communist organizers played a prominent part.

As a result of their activity among the unemployed during the slump and among the militants during the rearmament boom, the Communists had strengthened their influence. Trade Union officials redoubled their complaints; although, as Marquand[1] pointed out, 'in many such cases strikers have joined the appropriate Trade Unions, and the effect of Communist leadership has been in some cases to induce employers to consider the desirability of entering into agreements with the regular Union leaders, who will undertake to protect them from sudden stoppages or infractions of the agreement'. It is true that the rank-and-file movements which had sprung up once more in the early 'thirties were to some extent under Communist influence; and it is true that 'the usual desire of workpeople to obtain higher wages as soon as there is an upward trend in industrial conditions furnishes an opportunity for irresponsible elements to encourage unconstitutional action';[2] but it seems too much to assume that even a majority of the hundreds of unofficial strikes were engineered by Communists. Militancy during an upswing is hardly surprising.

After 1933, however, it is particularly difficult to estimate Communist influence in strikes. Even in Communist sources the emphasis, for tactical reasons connected with the 'United Front', was generally laid on successful action with and through independent workers' organizations rather than on the achievements of the Party alone; there was less readiness to claim credit for strike leadership. The account of Douglas Hyde, a one-time Communist,[3] in 1948 suggests that the Party decisively 'shifted its emphasis from the Labour Exchanges to the factories' only when war was fairly near and employment began to improve: ' "Every factory a fortress", was the slogan, and with amazing speed important factories earned the reputation for being Communist-dominated. By the time the war actually came Communist shop stewards could boast, "We can get a strike over a cup of tea at any time" — an ideal position from the party point of view which gave it a tremendous sense of power, and made it a force to be reckoned with.'

But although towards the end of the interwar period Communists may have been able to instigate particular strikes, their influence seems to have been slight not only in 1939-40, but also when it was thrown on the other side of the scale in mid-1941. With the German invasion of the U.S.S.R., Communist influence was directed towards supporting the British war effort and therefore — a certain hangover effect apart — against strikes. (Moreover, states Mr. Hyde, the membership of the Party, which was put at just under 30,000 before

[1] *Organized Labour in Four Continents* (1939), pp. 183, 185.

[2] *Ministry of Labour Report* for 1936 (*Cmd.* 5432), p. 67.

[3] *From Communism to Catholicism* (1948), p. 10. Mr. Hyde was News Editor of the *Daily Worker* for five years from 1940.

the attack on Russia, more than doubled itself in a few months[1] — although the wave of enthusiasm, as during the General Strike, spent itself, and the increase was not maintained.) But if one takes the proportionate number of the year's strikes occurring in the third quarter of 1941 and compares it with the corresponding proportion of strikes occurring in the third quarters of other war years, then the greatest damping-down of strikes took place in 1940 (in the period after Dunkirk) and in 1944 (during the invasion of Europe from the west), rather than in 1941 (during the battle for Moscow) or in 1942 (during the drive towards Stalingrad). These figures, although of course they are mere straws in the wind, imply that Communist influence on strikes was overshadowed by stronger motives.

Wartime Incidence of Strikes

Number of strikes in:—		(a) *Whole year*	(b) *July-September only*	(c) *(b) as per cent of (a)*
(1940)	Metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc., only:	229	47	20.5
	All other industries:	693	145	20.9
	All industries:	922	192	20.8
(1941)	Metal, etc., only:	472	135	28.6
	All other industries:	779	171	22.0
	All industries:	1251	306	24.4
(1942)	Metal, etc., only:	476	147	30.9
	All other industries:	827	179	21.6
	All industries:	1303	326	25.0
(1943)	Metal, etc., only:	612	154	25.2
	All other industries:	1173	303	25.8
	All industries:	1785	457	25.6
(1944)	Metal, etc., only:	610	120	19.7
	All other industries:	1584	328	20.7
	All industries:	2194	448	20.4

Source: *Ministry of Labour Gazette.*

The figures for metal, engineering and shipbuilding are given separately, since Communist influence was probably strongest in the chief Unions catering for these trades.[2] The breakdown not only fails to reveal a relative damping-down of strikes in these industries in the most critical periods of 1941 and 1942 but even suggests the opposite.

However, it must be remembered that there was a tremendous expansion of these industries. Although the increase in the number of strikes over the period

[1] Mr. Hyde's figure is somewhat higher than was officially claimed. Official membership figures (quoted in *The Times*, February 25th, 1949) are as follows: 1935, 6500; 1939, 17,756; March 1944 (peak), 47,500; June 1947, 38,500; March 1948, 42,500.

[2] This may represent a deliberate orientation of effort, based on Russian experience: 'the metal workers in Russia – probably the same is true also in regard to other capitalist countries – represent the vanguard of the proletariat . . . The metal workers were the best paid, the most class-conscious and the best educated proletarians. The textile workers . . . were the most backward and the worst-paid mass of workers . . .' (LENIN, *The Revolution of* 1905 (1917)).

of the war was proportionately greater than the increase in the industries' man-power, the disproportion was less than in many other industries — notably, of course, mining — where the number of strikes greatly increased while the numbers employed fell. Thus it might be argued that strikes in the metal industries *were* 'damped down' during the war period, at least relatively to the experience of other trades. In any case more friction was to be expected in these key war industries, just because they were subject to constant expansion and changes in production methods.

Thus although there seems to be little trace of direct short-term Communist influence in restraint of strikes even during the most critical periods of the war on the Russian front, it is arguable that Communists contributed to a general steadying influence over the war period as a whole after June 1941. They certainly pressed vigorously for Joint Production Committees, instead of fostering the activity of such 'independent' bodies as the pre-war Aircraft Shop Stewards' Council. But it is an open question how far the Communists, for whom this was an unfamiliar role, were able to inhibit a natural wartime militancy. If strikes were less severe than they might have been, other factors — the increased employment of women, and the unremitting efforts of the Unions — may equally have been responsible. If one may risk a qualitative judgment, direct short-term Communist influence seems to have been slight, although their indirect longer-term influence may have meant more. This is probably also true of the interwar period when Communists favoured strike action more or less unconditionally: even where their influence was appreciable, they were the midwives of strikes rather than the begetters of strikes.[1]

Communist influence in the Unions has generally speaking been greater at branch level, and therefore in Trades Councils, than at top level. Already in 1927 the T.U.C. had banned Trades Councils which maintained connexions with the Minority Movement. The Labour Party eventually issued a list of proscribed organizations, and the T.U.C. continued to utter occasional warnings. These were followed in 1935 by two circulars from the General Council: Circular 16, the so-called 'Black Circular,' to Trades Councils, stating that 'any Council which accepts delegates connected in any way with either Communist or Fascist organizations or any of their ancillary bodies' would not be recognized; and Circular 17, to all affiliated Unions, asking them 'to give consideration to the possibility of drawing up regulations or amending the rules of your organization so as to empower them to reject the nominations of members of disruptive bodies for any official position within your organization'. At the 1936 Congress it was reported that 350 Trades Councils were implementing the policy of Circular 16, 4 were being reconstructed, 2 were removed from the T.U.C.'s register for refusal to comply, and 38 others were removed for not having answered.[2] This was a considerably larger majority than had favoured the

[1] Even in the post-war period, when, with the Cominform's opposition to the Marshall Plan, the 'Party line' changed once again in mid-December 1947, there does not seem to have been a very marked increase in the number of strikes. In the first six months of 1948 there were 1052 strikes; in the corresponding period of 1947, which was interrupted by the 'fuel crisis' and a partial industrial shutdown, there were 947; while in the same period of 1946 there were 1153.

[2] T.U.C. *Report* (1936), pp. 113-14. In 1941 and 1942, when details were given to Trades Union Congresses of some 30-odd Trades Councils against which action was being taken because of 'disruptive activities', half of these Trades Councils were in the London area.

proposal to the Unions (Circular 17): 41 Unions had agreed, 25 had refused to comply and many others professed themselves indifferent. The voting, on the reference-back of the paragraph dealing with Circulars 16 and 17, endorsed the General Council's action by 1,869,000 to 1,427,000. The general labour Unions were in favour; but the Miners' Federation and some of the powerful craft Unions objected to the implied interference with Trade Union autonomy.

Where Communists attended Trades Councils after 1936, they did so less openly and their influence must have been appreciably weakened. A few of the Councils continued intransigent; in 1937 the T.U.C. General Council had to issue a reminder to Trades Councils not to support unofficial strikes, since one Trades Council had circularized all the others 'asking them to bring pressure either by letter or interview' upon the Unions concerned in unofficial strikes in their areas so that the strikes should be officialized; and ten years later the General Council had to send out a further reminder on the same point, since 'Trades Councils had supported unofficial strikes and even breakaway Unions.[1]

After the change of the Communist 'line' in 1941, support developed for the withdrawal of Circular 16 to the Trades Councils: in 1942 there were 2,137,000 votes for its withdrawal as against 2,550,000 for its continuance; and in the following year the General Council itself proposed the modification of the 'model rules' for Trades Councils so as to permit the presence of Communists. Since the end of the war, however, international developments have naturally renewed and greatly increased the tension between the Communists and the Labour Movement, and at the end of 1948 the T.U.C. once more launched a determined campaign against their influence.[2]

Other political bodies have attempted to build organizations within the Unions: the Trotskyists and Common Wealth, for example. So also, of course, have the Liberal and Conservative Parties.[3] However, the claims made by these bodies have probably borne little relation to their strength, and it is unlikely that any of them have had a significant effect on strikes.

The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, however, is probably of greater importance; *The Times* (April 12th, 1948) reported that it 'now covers almost the whole country after a remarkable growth in the past two years, and, apart from the Communists, is probably the most significant of a number of special groupings recently formed inside the British Trade Union movement'.[4] Moreover, although it is difficult to assess the effect of the attitudes of religious bodies on the strike question, it is worth citing Catholic opinion since it is more articulate than that of other religious organizations.

[1] T.U.C. *Reports* (1937), p. 107; (1947), p. 121.

[2] In 1948 *The Times*, in two special articles on 'Communism in the Trade Unions' (February 9th and 10th) wrote of a 'high proportion of Communist shop stewards, as well as a substantial number among the officials at all levels and on the executives of many Unions', their chief strength being in the A.E.U., E.T.U., Tailors and G.W.U., and C.S.C.A.

[3] See, for example, *The Times* (January 17th, 1927 and April 12th, 1948) (Liberals); and *The Times* (May 3rd, 1948) (Conservatives). Specifically Conservative Trade Unions have also been known: for example the Ilkeston Conservative Miners' Association (registered 1907, dissolved 1917), and the Bryn Conservative Workingmen's Mutual Protection Association. (See *Reports of Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies* for 1917 and 1918).

[4] The structure of the A.C.T.U. is based on that of the Church, with 'parish groups' and 'deanery executives' sending representatives to a diocesan body (the movement, when the article was written, having existence in every diocese but two). The diocesan associations were linked by a national liaison committee.

A Catholic attitude was outlined in general terms in the two Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Of course these and other Catholic pronouncements are unequivocally against the waging of class warfare as a basic political aim; but this is by no means the same as a wholesale condemnation of strikes. Cardinal Manning, who supported Joseph Arch in the 1870s and played a famous part as mediator in the 1889 dock strike, admitted the justice of certain strikes in his commentary on *Rerum Novarum*:[1] 'a strike is like war. If for just cause, a strike is right and inevitable; it is a healthful restraint on the despotism of capital. It is the only power in the hands of working men . . . It is evident that between a capitalist and a working man there can be no freedom of contract. The capitalist is invulnerable in his wealth.'

The Catholic attitude to strikes was elaborated in a work published in the U.S.A. in 1921.[2] Its author admits the theoretical propriety of virtually every type of strike, including a revolutionary general strike, provided (1) the cause be 'just', (2) that the evils likely to result from the strike do not outweigh the value of the end sought, (3) the strike be 'lawfully' conducted, (4) that less drastic methods have been tried without result, and (5) that there is a reasonable hope of success — in sympathetic strikes, 'more than ordinary assurance as to the likelihood of a successful outcome is necessary'. (Changing conditions have extended the problems of principle still further; when for example French professors struck in 1948, a writer in the Jesuit review *Etudes* conceded that the strike was legal and that the demands were reasonable and justified, but condemned the strike as immoral — on the grounds that the professors were not merely employees but delegates of the parents and the State.[3] Of course, any casuistic approach must be hedged with qualifications, and is difficult to interpret as an indication of actual practice.

Quadragesimo Anno[4] called attention to the development, since the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, of 'immense power and despotic economic domination . . . concentrated in the hands of a few, who for the most part are not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, which they administer at their own good pleasure. This domination,' continued Pius XI,

> 'is most powerfully exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, also govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life-blood to the entire economic body, and grasping in their hands, as it were, the very soul of production, so that no one can breathe against their will.'

He noted that 'the survival of those only who are the strongest, and this often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least attention to the dictates

[1] *A Pope on Capital and Labour* (reprinted 1931).

[2] McLean, *The Morality of the Strike* (New York, 1921), *passim*, and esp. pp. 123, 133-5. Specimen justifications for a general strike are suggested: e.g. 'if the nation's representatives undertook to abolish the Catholic parochial school system or to disfranchise all members of the American Federation of Labor.' (The Bishop of Strasbourg was in fact reported by the Communist *Sunday Worker* (March 22nd, 1925) to have called school 'strikes' as a protest against his Government's policy of secularizing schools.) But it is stressed that even in such a case there could 'hardly, if ever, be justification for strike action', since other less drastic methods of redress would presumably be available. On this topic, see also Watt, *Capitalism and Morality* (1929), ch. vii.

[3] See *Catholic Herald* (August 13th, 1948).

[4] *The Social Order: Its Reconstruction and Perfection* (1931), pp. 39-40.

of conscience', involved 'a threefold struggle' — the struggle for competitive supremacy, the 'fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in economic struggles', and the struggle between States themselves.

It is the second point — the 'fierce battle to acquire control of the State' — which is crucial here. If the State tends increasingly to become the prey of the 'despotism of capital', and if strikes tend increasingly to involve the interference of the State, what becomes of the right to strike? Cardinal Bourne in the General Strike of 1926[1] maintained that 'there is no moral justification for a strike of this character. It is a direct challenge to lawfully constituted authority, and inflicts, without adequate reason, immense discomfort and injury on millions of our fellow-countrymen. It is, therefore, a sin against the obedience which we owe to God . . . All are bound to uphold and assist the Government, which is the lawfully constituted authority of the country, and represents, therefore, in its own appointed sphere the authority of God Himself.' It would be too much to expect of any Government that it should not give publicity to such a pronouncement, even in breach of ecclesiastical etiquette; but five Catholic M.P.s protested to the Cardinal against the judgment, and others clearly disagreed with it.[2] But although it may be argued that the general strike was a special case, and that the explicitly non-revolutionary intentions of the T.U.C. were irrelevant in such a situation, the question remains whether, if the security of the State were thought to be affected by a big strike, Catholic opinion would not be automatically enlisted against such a strike.

Principles apart, there is also the question of tactics. Catholic opinion in the Trade Unions has been of importance: the Webbs,[3] commenting on the 'backwardness' of the cotton Unions, drew attention to 'the influence of an exceptionally large proportion of Roman Catholics' among cotton operatives. More recently, Marquand[4] has suggested that the Labour Party's support for non-intervention in the Spanish civil war was explainable only by the existence of a strong Catholic influence in the Unions; and, significantly, it is Unions with a large Irish membership which have been readiest to exclude Communists. 'This religious influence within the movement', continued Marquand, 'cannot be estimated in any statistical form; but there is no doubt that it exists and that the movement cannot be properly understood unless that fact is known.' Thus anti-Communism may, in certain situations, have meant anti-militancy;[5] and the tactical working agreement between Catholics and Communists which was evinced to some extent in France during the Popular Front period[6] and, of course, in continental resistance movements during the war, has no analogy in

[1] On May 9th. A similar view was maintained by the Anglican Bishop of Norwich in a letter to *The Times* dated May 8th, 1926.

[2] For an account of the attitude of Catholics during the General Strike, see McEntee, *The Social Catholic Movement in Great Britain* (New York, 1927), Appendix B.

[3] *History of Trade Unionism* (1926 edition), p. 479.

[4] *Organized Labour in Four Continents* (1939), p. 187.

[5] In the U.S.A. in 1949, Cardinal Spellman, faced with a strike of grave-diggers, alleged that their Union was Communist-dominated, and insisted – apparently successfully – that the men came back as individuals; 'then he graciously permitted them to join an A.F.L. Union whose moderation and relinquishment of the strike weapon mollified him.' (*New York Herald Tribune*, European edn., March 16th, 1949.)

[6] Cf. M. Thorez's pamphlet *Catholiques et Communistes–La Main Tendue*, which cited *Quadragesimo Anno* in assertion of the essential identity of both parties' social objectives.

these islands. When the Irish T.U.C. split in 1943, it was allegedly because of Communist domination.[1]

The influence of the Church of England in these matters can be assessed even less. During most of the nineteenth century Church opinion (with certain notable exceptions, such as the Christian Socialists and the Radical persons who supported Joseph Arch) was with the employers; hitherto, wrote a committee of clerics in 1880, strikes and Trade Unions have been held to be 'economical mistakes', and 'disturbances in trade have been attributed wholly to their action ... The clergy have for the most part endorsed this opinion, and they are hardly to be blamed, if, misled by acknowledged authorities, they have sided with the masters'.[2] The effects of the Great Depression, however could hardly be ascribed wholly to the action of 'strikes and Trade Unions', and thenceforward Church opinion began to soften. In 1926 during the General Strike, Archbishop Davidson's proposals for mediation were too liberal to be broadcast, or published by the *British Gazette*, and were released when they were too late to be of use.[3] But Church opinion was divided; the question of the involvement of the State in strikes is one of concern to an established Church.

Some Nonconformist bodies — notably in South Wales — have understandably been somewhat more sympathetic with strikers than has the Anglican Church; the Society of Friends, for example, in *The Quaker Pathway for Industry* (1926), drew emphatic attention to the wage-cuts which had occasioned the strike; and conversely 'some of the strongest fighting centres proved also to be the most religious'.[4] Of course, religious movements have played a real part in shaping British Labour ideology, and such organizations as the Industrial Christian Fellowship have left some mark on industrial relations.

All in all, however, the effect of religious opinion on strikes has probably been very small. The Protestant Churches, as far as in them lay, have recently striven to be impartial in a field where impartiality is not easy: in the words of a Baptist parson who preached to stay-down strikers at Waleswood colliery in May 1948 on the text 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage', 'it was difficult, for I had to keep strictly neutral, give them spiritual courage, and yet avoid supporting the strike'.[5]

In brief, then, the Trade Union movement has been becoming more heterogeneous in composition and therefore, probably, less inclined to take mass

[1] 'An allegation for which it is impossible to find any justification.' (BAROU, *British Trade Unions* (1947), p. 47.)

[2] *A Letter to the Clergy on the Subject of Labour Organizations* (1880), signed by 32 clergy, including two bishops and some other dignitaries. The most notable exceptions to the rule were Canon Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall, who in one year 'interfered' in as many as fourteen industrial disputes, and Bishop Westcott (see LYND, *England in the Eighteen-Eighties* (1945), pp. 322-4.)

[3] ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE (*Christianity and Social Order* (1942), pp. 22-3) referred to the episode, and stressed the view that 'it could hardly ever be right for the Church ... to propose terms for the solution of a dispute' although it should 'urge the spirit and method of conciliation' and may well 'recall the parties to proposals made by competent persons'.

[4] See HORRABIN, POSTGATE and WILKINSON, *A Worker's History of the Great Strike* (1927), p. 41f. 'My dear Public,' ran the Wigan Joint Strike Committee's bulletin for Sunday, May 9th, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with All thy heart, soul, mind and strength and Thy neighbour as thyself. Daily Bulletin/News from all points,/Situation magnificent,/Everywhere solid.' — Cf. also SLATER, *Stay-Down Miner* (1936), p. 74f.

[5] *Daily Express* (May 10th, 1948).

strike action; the Unions' friendly society functions have on the whole acted, as was originally argued, as a stabilizing factor; the permanent Trade Union official, who has developed as a negotiator rather than a strike leader, has grown in authority; and the control of strikes — or at least of the scale and duration of strikes — by the Union Executive has become easier to exercise. The development of the T.U.C. as the general staff of the Unions as a whole, and the shifting of the strategical field from that of mere wages and working conditions to include the most comprehensive political objectives, have, for the present at any rate, made massive and stubborn strikes obsolete. The resistant, militant elements in the Unions, although they have always given life and enthusiasm to the movement, have proved less and less able to dominate it. Nor has it been much affected by the activities of outside bodies.

At this point, however, we must consider the corresponding development of Employers' Associations. For some time these grew in organizational strength even more rapidly than the Trade Unions, and this has probably not been without effect on the Unions' strike policy.

* * *

Section 2: Development of Employers' Organizations

Employers' Organizations are of two main types, although their functions sometimes overlap. On the one hand there are trade associations which exist to provide statistics and other services to their members, with the general object of preventing uneconomic competition, and on the other there are associations dealing with labour questions.[1] It is of course the latter with which we are concerned. Employers' Organizations are probably more stable than Trade Unions for two reasons. In the first place their objects are more specific; they exist primarily to protect the business interests of the owners, whereas Trade Unions 'are established to protect something less definite, the rights of the workers'.[2] Secondly, their members are less likely to find difficulty in maintaining their subscriptions.

Data on Employers' Organizations, however, are available only intermittently, since these bodies are reticent about their constitution, membership, and finance, and the British Employers' Confederation (unlike the T.U.C.) treats its annual reports as strictly confidential documents. While all important Trade Unions are registered under the 1871 Trade Union Act, none of the great Employers' Organizations, and comparatively few small ones, is so registered[3] — although most of them would fall within the official definition of a Trade Union.

The history of the particular Employers' Organizations which we are considering is largely one of counter-attack on the Trade Unions.[4] Employers,

[1] The Cable Makers' Association, for example, has both functions. (See P.E.P. *Planning*, No. 221 (May 12th, 1944), on British Trade Associations.)

[2] Warner and Low, *The Social System of the Modern Factory*; *The Strike: A Social Analysis* (Yale, 1947), pp. 131-2.

[3] In 1935 only 89 Employers' Organizations were registered, many of which were organizations of small-scale masters who employed few assistants and often performed manual work themselves. Registration is also possible under the Companies Act of 1929.

[4] For a summary account of the growth of Employers' Organizations see Richardson, *Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (1938), p. 77f, and H.M.S.O. Industrial Relations Handbook (1944), p. 15f.

according to Adam Smith's much-quoted dictum, are always in tacit combination; 'we seldom, indeed, hear of this combination, because it is the usual, and one may say, the natural state of things which nobody ever hears of'. In any case, employers start with a strong natural advantage: a single large employer, as Marshall[1] put it, is a combination in himself: 'even where employers are not in a combination, tacit, or avowed, to regulate wages, each large employer is in his own person a perfectly firm combination of employing power. A combination of a thousand workers has a very weak and uncertain force in comparison with that of a single resolute employer of a thousand men.' The retarded development of Employers' Organizations, in fact, illustrates the strength of their position; for a long time they had Parliament and the law on their side, and could afford to improvise.

In 1825, indeed, the Committee of Trades in Newcastle asserted that organization existed 'among the Employers of almost every Branch of Business, for the purpose of Regulating the Wages of the labouring Classes agreeable to their own Wishes'.[2] Yet the Committee on Artisans and Machinery of the previous year were able to find only one instance of a 'perfect' combination of masters; and such employers' combinations as did exist at this period seem to have been either retaliatory against the 'bumper strike' or else merely the 'employers' side of "joint monopolies" operating with the encouragement and connivance of the workers'.[3] By the end of the 1860s even Trade Union advocates were still writing of Employers' Organizations as novelties, and — despite the emergence of a National Federation of Associated Employers at the end of 1873 — as late as the 1890s these organizations were still largely ephemeral and retaliatory; the individualism of employers in a competitive economy being enough to account for their reluctance to combine permanently.[4] Indeed, even at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century the relic of *ad hoc* organization persisted:

> 'employers sometimes have recourse to some method of mutual indemnification by which the financially weaker of their number are temporarily subsidized by the stronger, whether through the machinery of a permanent employers' association or of an emergency committee. Employers' associations being usually composed of much smaller numbers than trade unions, are, as a rule, able to act in greater secrecy and less formality than is possible in a workmen's union.'[5]

Eventually, however, the power of the Trade Unions evoked strong and durable combinations of employers. By 1924 it was possible to say that 'in nearly every

[1] *Economics of Industry* (1919 edn.), p. 370.

[2] See HAMMOND, *The Skilled Labourer* (1919), p. 202. But *continuous* associations of employers (to adapt the Webbs' definition of Trade Unions) seem, in fact, to have been few and far between.

[3] See W. H. HUTT, *The Theory of Collective Bargaining* (1930), p. 27f.

[4] The most notable exceptions, of course, were the engineering employers in the 1870s, and the shipowners, whose federation led the way in the counter-attack on the 'New Unionism' of the early 1890s. In 1898, after the defeat of the great strikes of miners and engineers, representatives of existing Employers' Organizations set up an Employers' Parliamentary Council (not unlike the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C.); but it does not seem to have played a very important part.

[5] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition (1910-11), vol. XXV, p. 1027.

case' the employers were organized in an association of their own; that non-federated employers were less numerous proportionately than unorganized workers; and that non-federated firms in most cases followed the conditions established by bargaining between organized workers and employers.[1] If the coverage of Employers' Organizations is reckoned according to the workers employed by member firms, it is noteworthy that in the trough of the economic depression of the 1930s the National Confederation of Employers' Organizations alone (i.e. without counting organizations outside the confederation) covered firms 'normally employing' some 7 million workers. At this time total Trade Union membership was less than 4½ million, and T.U.C.-affiliated membership little over 3½ million.[2] Employers are generally organized on an industrial basis, and their organizations are therefore more adaptable than are the Unions to the emergence of new industries.[3]

If the statistics of Employers' Organizations[4] are examined over time, it will be found that their total number rises to a peak in the middle or late 1920s, then falls away, then rises again, but to a lower peak. It is characteristic of this type of organization first to cover its field with single units and then to consolidate by amalgamations. Moreover, the greater concentration of control in industry, and the tendency towards larger firms, also tends to reduce the number of single units — a process which was accentuated during the depression. The general tendency towards organizational centralization may be illustrated by taking the number of federations and national associations as a percentage of the total number of Employers' Organizations:—

	1911	1936
Mining and quarrying:	11%	18%
Textiles:	13%	18%
Metal, etc.:	6%	27%
Transport:	4%	7%
Building:	6%	3%
Clothing:	4%	18%
Other:	8%	18%
All industries:	7%	15%

Centralization seems to have developed most strongly in the metal industries, and although as one might expect there is little or no sign of it in transport and building (where the proportion of small firms remains high), there has, all in all, been a marked advance.

[1] Cole, *Organized Labour* (1924), p. 117.

[2] Richardson, loc. cit., Trade Union membership, particularly that of the general labour Unions, naturally suffered during the depression; the Trade Union subscription is sometimes a marginal expense which has to be abandoned until better times – when, incidentally, the prospects of collective bargaining are brighter. But there was also a certain lapse in the membership of Employers' Organizations; some employers felt that they could no longer afford to be bound by wage agreements concluded earlier. When the depression had passed, however, both types of organization began to grow again fairly steadily. Recently, of course, nationalization, by removing sectors of industry from private control, has offset the increasing coverage of the Employers' Confederation; but although it has no doubt stimulated Union development it has also established unified employing bodies.

[3] If a new industry is developed, it may be some time before the demarcation problems are settled as between the various Trade Unions concerned. But questions of Craft versus Industrial or General Unionism, and questions of prestige, do not vex Employers' Organizations.

[4] See the *Abstracts of Labour Statistics*.

The organizational strength of employers is, however, sometimes denied. Mr. G. S. Walpole,[1] for example, has argued that, by contrast with organized Labour, British employers have been 'a disorganized rabble': 'employer-management organization in this country is loose, incomplete and deplorably uncoordinated: whereas the comparable organization of Labour is simple, direct, reasonably comprehensive, and, in the full sense of the word, democratic.' In exaggerating the single-mindedness and executive powers of the T.U.C., Walpole is able to stress by contrast the 'chaotic' organization of employers, which is hampered by a 'haphazard' grouping of three top-level overlapping organizations. These are (*a*) the British Employers' Confederation, which arose out of the National Industrial Conference of 1919, and now, comprising about fifty separate federations, is the employers' supreme negotiating authority on all labour questions except those affecting blackcoated workers; (*b*) the Federation of British Industries, formed in 1916 to deal mainly with commercial questions; and (*c*) the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, combining about 120 local Chambers of Commerce on which are represented some 30,000 industrial undertakings and 20,000 trading and commercial concerns ranging from shops to banks and insurance companies.[2] It is not necessarily true that unity of purpose and action are hampered by overlapping central organizations; they may indeed be strengthened by it, since the governing executives of all three bodies are so largely drawn from a 'charmed ring of big businesses', as Walpole himself puts it.

In fact, Employers' Organizations seem to have become both wider in scope and closer in structure than the Trade Unions; in so far as mere 'organization is strength', they have been gaining on them.[3] This has naturally been remarked on at Trades Union Congresses: 'the extent to which the Confederation of Employers' Organizations controls questions of general policy, in the opinion of the General Council, points to the necessity for centralized negotiations to deal with questions for the whole movement.'[4] 'In every serious industrial struggle', said the President to the same Congress (1927), 'the workers inevitably meet with the opposition of the consolidated forces of capitalism . . . the employers are well organized. In each industry they have a powerful federation, and the industries are linked together in powerful organizations. When the workers claim increased wages, they do not wage their struggle only and simply with the organized employers in the individual industry, but with all the employers. They struggle against the employers' class as a class. Every means and agency at the disposal of the property-owning class is brought into the struggle on the employers' side.'[5] This statement was coloured, no doubt, by

[1] *Management and Men* (1944), ch. II, p. 129f.

[2] Although there is no formal Employers' Organization corresponding to the Trades Council, some liaison between employers in different industries is achieved locally by Chambers of Commerce and F.B.I. branches (the latter, however, not being specifically concerned with labour questions).

[3] The *political* influence of employers as such cannot be assessed adequately. The Attorney-General told the Commons in 1927 that only two registered Employers' Associations (the Cinematograph Employers' and the British Undertakers') out of a total of 94 and only one unregistered Association (the National Farmers' Union) had established political funds (*Hansard*, May 25th, 1927).

[4] T.U.C. *Report* for 1927 (see summary in T.U.C.'s *Final Report on Trade Union Structure and Closer Unity* (March 1947), p. 7).

[5] T.U.C. *Report* for 1927, p. 66.

the bitter experience of the Unions in the year previous; but the development of Employers' Organizations may be one reason why the Unions have lately been less inclined to challenge the employers to the 'fights to a finish' which marked the earlier part of the period.

* * *

Section 3: Developments in employer-worker relations

It is now possible to examine the changes in employer-worker relations which have developed in the setting we have described, and to appraise their effect on strikes. Certainly the practice of conciliation and arbitration, and the setting up of standing joint bodies for negotiation have contributed to a real change of attitude between employers and Unions, and have much reduced the severity of strikes. Historically, it has not been — as one might perhaps have expected — the Co-operative movement which set the pace for this improvement in industrial relations; the main impetus came in the years following the General Strike, when the Unions were at their weakest and were unable to support strikes even if they had wished to do so. The *rapprochement* between employers and workers has, however, been evidenced mainly at top level, as can be seen from the difficulties of low-level joint consultation. Moreover, what may be thought of as employers' substitutes for Trade Unionism — Company Unions, profit-sharing schemes and so on — have not achieved a very great influence, even though these too have probably contributed to lessening the severity of strikes.

Strikes and the development of negotiating machinery

The greatly increased coverage of negotiating machinery has, no doubt, immensely enlarged the potential size of strikes:

> 'The nature and the scale of industrial disputes in England today are largely determined by the negotiating machinery which has been set up in nearly all those industries where Trade Unionism plays a significant part. That machinery has been created by the industries themselves, originally with the purpose of preventing disputes. It has not done so; but it has modified their nature profoundly. In the nineteenth century, the problem of Industrial Relations was a problem of local strikes, often of great severity. Today, the problem has shifted; it is the large-scale stoppage, involving the whole, or a large part, of an industry, with which we are concerned. Local strikes still occur; but they are usually "unofficial" — unsupported by the unions, and consequently of brief duration. It is the national strike that matters.
>
> 'This change might well be regarded as one of the most important events in the recent economic history of England; but it has been little noticed.'[1]

Yet since these words were written, national strikes have hardly 'mattered' at all; and recently it has been unofficial strikes — unsupported and short as they usually are — which have claimed attention.

Even of the stormy years which preceded the first world war, Cole[2] argued

[1] J. R. Hicks, *The Early History of Industrial Conciliation in England, Economica* (March 1930), p. 25.
[2] *Organized Labour* (1924), p. 124f.

that the increased coverage of negotiating machinery had the effect of diminishing the number of strikes by securing 'peaceful' settlements — albeit because 'the right to strike is present in the background' — and that the proportion of settlements achieved without strikes was probably as high during the years of unrest as it had been earlier.[1] After the war, of course, strikes became even more frequent and severe, although little is known of disputes settled by other means. War, said the Spirit Sinister in Hardy's *Dynasts*, makes rattling good history, but peace is poor reading.[2] But even if the proportion of 'peaceful' settlements has been steadily rising, it may be asked whether this has happened simply because of the existence of an alternative method, or whether the development of the procedure of peaceful settlement has not induced Trade Unions to forswear in advance the use of the strike.

It is difficult to give a synoptic view of the development of collective bargaining machinery, since 'the difference in the geographical distribution, size and character of industrial undertakings, in the nature and extent of organization among employers and workpeople, in the structure and inter-relationship of their respective associations and in the rate of change in all these matters'[3] have resulted in a great diversity of methods operating at any one time, and a great difference of emphasis in the use of these methods at different times. At present three main forms of machinery, standing joint bodies, procedures of negotiation established by agreement or custom, and statutory wage-fixing machinery, cover almost the whole industrial field, and the boundaries of these are subject to further change, in the direction of unifying the practice of standing joint bodies and of giving statutory force to settlements and awards.[4]

Conciliation and arbitration

T. Rothstein, a Left-wing critic, has discussed the spread of conciliation at the beginning of the present century in the following terms:[5]

> 'It is well known that conflicts do not invariably arise whenever demands are made by one side or the other. Changes in the conditions of employment are taking place every day without leading to particular disputes, and

[1] Between 1910 and 1913 the yearly average number of strikes was over twice as high as it had been between 1904 and 1909; but the number of cases settled by conciliatory methods was almost three times as high (See Board of Trade *Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs for* 1913 (*Cd.* 7658), p. 35).

[2] So also WILLIAMSON and HARRIS, *Trends in Collective Bargaining* (New York, 1945), p. 4 suggest that there was 'probably more public knowledge about the 2,500 strikes during 1940' (in the U.S.A.) 'than about the 50,000 and more collective bargaining agreements in force during the same year – or how they developed'. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics proposes to supplement its strike statistics with data on industrial peace: the number of agreements signed each month, the number of workers affected, and whether the agreements were reached without a strike.

[3] *Industrial Relations Handbook* (H.M.S.O., 1944), p. 22. The number of Permanent Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration rose from 158 in 1904 to 343 in 1913; the number of standing joint bodies went up from about 50 in 1925 to over 200 during the second world war; the number of Trade Boards (now Wages Councils, with an enlarged coverage and scope) went up from 4 in 1910 to over 50 by the end of the inter-war period. Account must also be taken of the development of 'quasi-voluntary' wage-fixing machinery in road haulage, cotton, sugar refining and other industries, as well as of variations of the statutory machinery such as that covering agricultural workers.

[4] See BURNS, *Wages and the State* (1926); SELLS, *British Wages Boards* (1939); and ROBSON and TILLYARD, *The Enforcement of the Collective Bargain in the United Kingdom* (*Economic Journal*, March 1938).

[5] *From Chartism to Labourism* (1929), pp. 209, 210.

> indeed, industrial statistics in England show that in a great majority of cases — affecting from 80 to 90 per cent. of all employed workers — wages rise and fall without any conflicts whatever. How does this come about? If the reader thinks that it is achieved by simple and direct exchange of opinion, by negotiation between the two parties, he would be mistaken; conciliation procedure occupies so large a place in the regulation of the relations between the employer and the worker that it plays an important part even here, although there are no actual disputes to be settled . . . between 1898 and 1909 the number of workers whose wages were settled as the result of direct negotiations decreased from 764,622 to 175,338; there was also a decrease in the number of workers whose wages were changed by means of sliding scales (from 165,953 to 37,833); on the other hand, the number of workers whose wages were settled by conciliation procedure increased from 29,509 to 787,758. This clearly demonstrates the great part played by the machinery of conciliation. More and more effectively it abolishes the free play of forces which, in a latent form, is represented even by direct negotiations between employer and employed and replaces it by compromise, accepted in principle by the workers in advance.'[1]

The author insisted that to avoid negotiations with the employers and to settle disputes by arbitration or conciliation greatly reduced the importance of the Unions. Similarly, Mr. Ernest Bevin argued at a Conference of Trade Union Executives in 1946 against wage-fixing by the State as tending to infringe the bargaining rights of Trade Unions, and maintained that 'the more the Trade Unions went to the Arbitration Court, instead of settling these things themselves with the employers, the more they undermined their own authority'.[2]

What is, in fact, the effect of arbitration? Much has been written about the principles on which it is conducted — principles which tend to vary with economic conditions. The difficulties of fixing wages, for example, on any one, or any combination, of the accepted principles (the 'fair wage', 'the wage the trade will bear', the 'living' wage, etc.) are well known. Writers have complained that 'it cannot be too clearly recognized that in an arbitrator, legalism is a bias; the arbitrator's job is to find a settlement that the disputants can with advantage accept, not to impose a solution that seems to him fair and just';[3] and often enough the result of arbitration is pragmatically to split the difference between the claims with regard to the estimated relative strength of the parties, within the limits of what the industry is said to be able to bear and what the workers can be induced to accept. Thus successful arbitration means 'awarding with much unction the lion's share to the lion';[4] or, more euphemistically, of arriving

[1] Later statistics do not give the *number of workers whose wages were changed* by these various methods, but give instead the *extent of the wage changes* brought about by them. The number of cases coming up for conciliation and arbitration rose during the war years but fell – with a decrease in the number of strikes – after 1920, and particularly after 1925. Moreover, the work of Conciliation Boards was appreciably reduced by the work done by the growing number of Joint Industrial Councils. (See RICHARDSON, *Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (1931), p. 153.)

[2] *What the T.U.C. Is Doing* (April 1946), p. 3.

[3] HICKS, *The Theory of Wages* (1935), pp. 149-50.

[4] SQUIRES, *Monthly Review of the U.S. Department of Labour* (1918), p. 19.

'at the natural bargaining point without friction'.[1] If this is not done, one or other of the parties will probably put the question to the test of force; and the arbitrators' decision should therefore be such that both parties will know they are not likely to get better terms by resorting to strike or lockout. Since therefore arbitrators' judgments are based on an assessment of relative strength, 'their aim may be said to be industrial peace rather than industrial justice'.[2] Whether or not the introduction of a third-party decision in a field where no decision can be impartial in its effects produces a more equitable state of affairs, it certainly obviates trials of strength. Moreover when the Trade Unions consent to arbitration they are virtually consenting to forgo the strike; and, as has already been argued, the employer who correspondingly forgoes the lockout is, generally speaking, sacrificing less.

While the Ministry of Labour may be right in holding that compulsory arbitration, in so far as it is based on the prohibition of strikes, is 'unlikely to be successfully established as a permanent feature of industrial relations',[3] some writers have tried to define a proper field for it by drawing a distinction between two types of strikes and insisting that one of them can and should be forestalled by arbitration:

> '... there are two fundamentally different types of strikes and the same treatment is not applicable to both. The first of these types consists of strikes involving the interpretation and application of a collective agreement duly made by workers and employers. These have been called disputes concerning rights, for the agreement does establish rights and obligations and the agreement having been duly and properly made may be considered a contract ... The second type consists of strikes resulting from failure to agree upon the terms and conditions of employment and thus involves interests as distinguished from rights. For the resolution of these disputes there are few reasonably definite and generally accepted rules that can be applied.'[4]

The contention here is that compulsory arbitration should be invoked in the case of all 'disputes concerning rights' — i.e. in any case where an agreement is actually in being.[5]

[1] BOOTH, *The Human Factor in Industry, Employment Relations and the Basic Wage* (Tasmania, 1925).

[2] HUGH-JONES, *The State and Industrial Order*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February 1939), p. 197.

[3] *Industrial Relations Handbook* (H.M.S.O., 1944), p. 28.

[4] DOMENICO GAGLIARDO, *Strikes in a Democracy*, *American Economic Review* (March 1941).

[5] The writer quoted recommends, in addition, the prohibition of strikes in public utilities, compulsory settlement in any strike 'when the public is suffering seriously', and 'limited production of certain commodities and services during some strikes'. This is in the tradition of proposals for the humanization of war; but if the question of public interest is raised, the strikers' case must surely be considered on a level with that of the 'public'. The hedonistic calculus must be complete: the temporary inconvenience of, say, 100,000 people having to walk to work because of a transport strike has to be weighed against the more permanent 'inconvenience' of 500 bus drivers and their families who may be having to live below subsistence level. 'What a contrast', wrote Ben Tillett in a dramatic passage, 'between the squealing, struggling capitalist and well-to-do class, who squirmed and shrieked as they shouted "Famine!!" "Famine!!" and the year round silent suffering of the 52 per cent of our number who are more or less constantly fighting and facing the grim devils of hunger, misery, and death.' (*History of the London Transport Workers' Strike* (1911), p. 19). The fact that it is not only the 'capitalist class' that 'squeals' does not affect the point.

Certainly from a legalistic point of view it is natural enough to contend that the existence of a quasi-contractual agreement raises the question at issue from one of 'interests' to one of 'rights'. Yet if the question were not essentially one of interests it would not be an issue in dispute at all; and 'right', except in the narrowest sense, can hardly be predicated of an agreement operating in a field where (to quote the same writer) 'a generally acceptable ideological basis for the settlement of wages and conditions simply does not exist', and where any agreement, however 'duly and properly made', must have been a compromise determined largely by the relative strength of the parties at a previous date when other conditions may have been quite different.[1] It may, however, be insisted that, as with treaty obligations in international politics, the mere existence of an agreement should compel its acceptance if relations are not to dissolve into anarchy. Yet even in international politics no inconsistency has been found in insisting on the sanctity of treaty obligations and at the same time asserting the 'rights' of national sovereignty — i.e. asserting the 'right' to interpret, or sometimes even to evade, treaty obligations to suit sectional interests. The language of treaties has for this reason become equivocal enough to admit conflicting interpretations and the 'right' to go to war in defence of vital interests has not been renounced.

In the past, the T.U.C. has more than once (e.g. in 1902 and 1903) debated resolutions favouring compulsory arbitration, historically the prime objection to it being its denial of the right to strike.[2] But although compulsory arbitration has often been rejected in principle, in practice there has been an increasingly matter-of-course acceptance of 'voluntary' arbitration. When the National Arbitration Order came into force in 1940, Unions were specially urged to arrange for the inclusion of arbitration procedure (where this did not already exist) in their existing machinery, so as to prevent the National Arbitration Tribunal from being swamped. Thus the extension of compulsory arbitration into the present post-war period has come as far less of a shock than it would have after 1918, because in the interval the custom of submitting to arbitration has been strengthened; and although at recent Congresses there have been regular resolutions against the continuance of compulsory arbitration, these have hitherto, on the intervention of the General Council, been defeated, withdrawn, or shelved.[3] Meanwhile, except on the railways, compulsory arbitration has become the rule for nationalized industry.[4]

[1] This is not to say, of course, that the distinction can never be made between disputes on the interpretation and the revision of agreements. Provision has sometimes been made for arbitration on interpretation questions, while leaving strike action open at stated intervals, or after due notice on revision of an agreement.

[2] Cf. T.U.C. *Report* (1924), p. 487. (Contrast the paradoxical attitude of workers at an atomic plant at Oak Ridge, U.S.A., who in 1948 *demanded* compulsory arbitration and the complete abrogation of the right to strike; the management, wishing to reduce wages, were afraid of the arbitrators' traditional regard for the *status quo*, but were confident of winning a strike. See *Manchester Guardian* (May 20th, 1948).)

[3] At the time of writing, Order 1305 was being revised. The Order replacing it maintains limited provisions for compulsory arbitration, while formally restoring the right to strike.

[4] A writer in the *Economist* (December 18th, 1926) pointed out that the real place of compulsory arbitration was where the parties enjoyed equality of status, 'but it cannot be regarded as a satisfactory method to those trade unionists who are seeking to raise their status and extend their influence in industry'. Possibly it is now considered that equality of status has been sufficiently achieved in nationalized industry.

Negotiation through Standing Joint Bodies

By 1943 there were some 212 standing joint councils and committees established by voluntary agreement in various industries for negotiation, the settlement of disputes, and the discussion of questions of 'common interest'. Nearly half of these were Joint Industrial Councils on the Whitley model, for despite the failure to realize one of the chief professed objectives of the Whitley proposals (that of giving the workers a bigger 'say' in the running of industry)[1] and despite a high mortality of J.I.C.s during the post-war depression, these bodies developed strongly before and during the second world war. At first sight this development looks like a reversion to the methods of 'simple and direct negotiation'; but in fact both sides are increasingly committed in advance to conciliation and arbitration on a higher level if agreement is not reached on the joint body. (Characteristic examples of arrangements made by these bodies for reference of their unsolved problems to the Industrial Court, to arbitrators appointed by the Ministry of Labour and National Service under the Industrial Courts Act, and to other special bodies, may be found in the 1944 Industrial Relations Handbook.)[2]

(The establishment of these bodies met with a good deal of suspicion from militants.[3] They objected to joint machinery on principle; it would tend to make Trade Unionists responsible for the running of industry on capitalist lines, and would widen the gap between officials and rank and file. Even the more orthodox were certainly aware of its limitations: such machinery, they said, could not be expected to furnish a settlement 'for the more serious conflicts of interest involved in the working of an economic system primarily governed and directed by motives of private profit'.[4] If such serious conflicts were so settled, wrote the Webbs in their peroration to the *History of Trade Unionism*, it was likely to be by collusion at the consumer's expense. Others were afraid that standing joint bodies would seriously inhibit Trade Union organization.[5])

However, the general attitude of the T.U.C. was favourable, on the ground that any development leading to increased organization on both sides, increased Trade Union recognition, and permanence, is valuable. This attitude was well expressed in the T.U.C. and Labour Party publication 'Industrial Negotiations and Agreements':[6]

> 'The principal result of the setting up of Joint Councils was a good one — organization was encouraged and made stronger . . . there are two directions

[1] J.I.C.s have become no more than negotiating bodies.

[2] P. 26f. Further details of J.I.C.s and similar bodies may be found in the 1926 *Survey of Industrial Relations*, in RICHARDSON, *Industrial Relations in Great Britain*, 1931 and in the *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report for the Years* 1939-1946.

[3] 'Do not have alliances with the enemy,' said Mr. A. J. Cook at the 1928 Congress. 'They say "Your leaders are sitting down with us and they agree that you must face the facts of industry." Yes, face the facts. The facts of the worker's home; the facts of the worker's life' (T.U.C. *Report* (1928), p. 437).

[4] Mr. Clynes and others, in a note to the *Final Report of the Whitley Committee* (*Cmd.* 9153, 1918).

[5] Cf. Mr. C. R. Flynn (N.U.D.A.W.) at an industrial conference in February 1927: 'in the industries covered by Joint Industrial Councils we meet the question asked by the non-unionist when we attempt to organize him, "Why should I pay my contribution to your organization? Can you give me anything which I cannot otherwise get through the decision of the J.I.C?" ' (*Towards Industrial Peace* (1927), p. 152.) The same argument was used about Trade Boards.

[6] Quoted, ibid.

> in which it has encouraged and extended some desirable features of an ordinary negotiating body. In the first place, it has brought together for joint action, unions catering for similar classes of labour or classes common to one industry, breaking down barriers; the mere existence of a body negotiating for practically all workers in an industry, being an achievement. In the second place, Whitley Councils are Standing Councils and not merely called together when a dispute occurs.'

On the face of it, if negotiation is to be carried on at all, a permanent negotiating body would seem better than a series of *ad hoc* bodies. If standing joint bodies are thought to be a danger to Trade Unionism, it is presumably because the Unions might drift into becoming mere subordinate organs of the joint bodies, unable to act without them.[1] How far such fears are chimerical is a matter of opinion; but it is clear that one of the effects of setting up permanent joint bodies has been, as was intended, to discourage strikes.

If the likelihood of severe (official) strikes is reduced, this in itself may affect the strength of the Trade Unions in negotiation. Apart from the threat of force, however, the main element in Trade Union negotiating strength is the negotiators' capacity to present a convincing case, and to present it with one voice. This may next be considered.

If one examines both 'sides of the table' in standing joint bodies, it is evident that, even though the number of individual representatives on each side is the same, the *number of organizations represented* on each side is often not the same; and that where the numbers differ, there are usually more Trade Unions represented than Employers' Organizations. Although representatives from a small number of organizations do not necessarily take a united stand on every question, they are on the whole more likely to do so than if they are drawn from a large number of organizations. From this point of view the employers' side on standing joint bodies is more likely to speak with one voice than are the workers' representatives who are drawn from a wider range of organizations and may have inter-Union and inter-trade conflicts of interest. 'There is not a trade union negotiator in this hall', said a N.U.R. delegate at the 1945 Congress, 'who would not agree with me when I say that one of the most difficult jobs that we have to undertake is, not always to convince the employer, but to agree upon a common policy so far as our own people are concerned.'[2] Thus, while it is impossible to argue conclusively from a mere count of Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations and to judge the relative strength of the parties accordingly, the figures are suggestive.

The 1944 *Industrial Relations Handbook* gives details of organizations represented on each of some 212 standing joint bodies which were in existence in 1943, and of these 168 — about four-fifths — have been analysed.[3] On these 168 bodies there are 399 separate representations from Trade Unions as against

[1] The comment of one of the leaders of a strike at Smithfield in 1946 is significant: 'If they returned they would come under the iron rod of the joint industrial council' (*The Times*, April 11th, 1946).

[2] T.U.C. *Report* (1945), p. 235.

[3] *Handbook*, pp. 206-31. 29 standing joint bodies, in the industrial and non-industrial Government service and Local Authority non-trading services, are omitted because it is difficult to be precise on the question of what 'Employers' Organizations' are represented; and a further 15 are omitted, mainly in metal and certain miscellaneous industries, where individual employers were concerned.

288 from Employers' Organizations. Thus on the average 2.4 Trade Unions are represented on each joint body, as compared with 1.7 Employers' Organizations — although the number of Trade Unions participating in these joint bodies (139) is much smaller than the number of Employers' Organizations (230).

By industries, the picture is as follows:—

Average number of Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations represented on standing joint bodies

	Mining and quarrying	*Textiles*	*Metal etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*	*Other*	*All industries*
Trade Unions:	1.6	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.5	1.0	2.6	2.4
Employers' Organizations:	1.0	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.7	1.0	2.2	1.7

Such averages naturally conceal a considerable variation in the number of organizations represented on different bodies; but if the standing joint bodies are examined individually, we get the following picture:—

Standing joint bodies: relative organizational sectionalism of both sides

	Mining and quarrying	*Textiles*	*Metal etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*	*Other*	*All industries*
Bodies on which *Trade Unions* represented outnumber Employers' Organizations represented:	6	5	8	11	3	0	34	67
Bodies on which *equal numbers* of both sides' organizations are represented:	6	6	15	8	10	8	30	83
Bodies on which *Employers' Organizations* represented outnumber Trade Unions represented:	0	4	0	0	2	0	12	18

No account is taken of the *extent* to which the organizations of one side may outnumber those of the other; nor can any allowance be made for the relative *importance* of the bodies themselves as measured by the number of workers bound by their decisions. But it is noteworthy that the workers' organizations outnumber those of the employers in about 40 per cent of cases, while the reverse happens in less than 11 per cent of cases (mainly in retail distribution).

Most Employers' Organizations are represented on only one joint body, but some Unions — notably the general labour Unions — are represented on a large proportion of them. (N.U.D.A.W. was represented on 18 per cent, the N.U.G. & M.W. on 43 per cent, and the T. & G.W.U. on 46 per cent.) Service on a large number of joint bodies does, of course, add to a Union's fund of negotiating skill, but not necessarily to its bargaining power. True, from the point of view of strike action a large Union may be a very strong force; but its strength may not be correspondingly great in the context of joint organization and procedure, where it works as one section out of many, and where the strike weapon has been implicitly or explicitly forsworn.

Mutual change of attitude of employers' and workers' organizations

Against this background, there has been a growing tendency for each side to encourage organization by the other (and for Governments to encourage both), in the interests of industrial peace. 'The best security for Industrial Peace', wrote the Commissioners of 1917, 'is organization of both employers and workpeople employed. If the men are badly organized the result is unauthorized local strikes; if the employers are not strongly federated you have a minority who refuse to pay the district rate.'[1] It is of course still premature to claim that a complete agreement has been reached on either side about the value of the other's organizations, but mutual approval has developed steadily.

Employers' motives have been various. Some employers desired the development of Trade Unionism in their rivals' factories, and for this reason were prepared to tolerate it in their own: 'We have early evidence', wrote W. H. Hutt, 'of workmen's societies being countenanced by the masters and used as an instrument against factories which were "underselling". And we find unions claiming that their sole object was "to protect the upright manufacturer against the unfair competition of the avaricious one, and to secure a fair remuneration for labour".'[2] So also in more recent times:—

> 'If there are firms outside the employers' organization who compete unfairly because they do not comply with the terms of the wage agreement arrived at on the J.I.C., the Employers are continually appealing to the Unions to take action against these firms, even to the extent of striking them, in order to secure uniformity of conditions. It is manifestly most unfair that the Employers should not be prepared to give a *quid pro quo* and help by giving facilities for trade union organization within their works, or even by refusing to employ non-union labour. The Boot and Shoe, Pottery, Printing and Match J.I.C.'s, amongst others, have agreed, as Councils, to take united action to get a hundred per cent trade union organization.'[3]

In the great textile strike of 1932, one of the questions at issue was the reinstatement of workers discharged in the course of a rationalization movement which involved wage reductions contrary to existing agreements. In this strike,

> 'operatives who withdrew their labour on the demand of the unions were in a large measure fighting the cause of employers who were desirous of honouring the agreements, and in the early stage the Chairman of the Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association was alleged to have told the unions that they could take their own action against employers breaking the agreements. This they did, and hence the reinstatement problem.'[4]

[1] *Report of Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest*, West Midlands area, *Cd.* 8665 (1917), p. 10. A closed shop was established in the South Wales coalfield during the first world war, and the 1917 Commissioners' Report for South Wales (*Cmd.* 8686, p. 42) offered as a 'Principal Recommendation' (*a*) that every workman should belong to a recognized Union, membership being a condition of employment, and (*b*) that all employers, especially in large-scale industries, should be similarly associated in an Employers' Association or if not, should be bound by the decisions of such an Association. The Commissioners' Report for Scotland (*Cd.* 8669, p. 7) proposed that arrears of Trade Union dues should be made recoverable by law.

[2] *The Theory of Collective Bargaining* (1930), p. 32.

[3] Dorothy Elliott (N.U.G. & M.W.), in *Towards Industrial Peace* (1927), pp. 164-5.

[4] See P.E.P. *Report on the British Cotton Industry* (1934), p. 84.

One might compare the even more definite assertion of the secretary of an 'important Federation' (unnamed),[1] that

> 'The scope and strength of the Federation is very materially assisted by the pressure brought to bear upon non-federated firms by the Union. There is a very clear and definite mutual understanding between the Federation and the Union upon this point.'

A more characteristic reason for employers' approval of Trade Unions has been the Unions' ability to discipline their members. Lord Northcliffe, for example, was writing in 1919:[2]

> 'Every skilled worker belongs to a union and his employers want him to. Ten years ago, when I acquired control of the London *Times*, this ancient institution was what is known as an open shop. It had never allowed Trade Unionism. I expressed my urgent wish to the various staffs that they should become members of the various labor unions to which they are attached, and there are now members of fifteen different labor unions working in this and every other newspaper office in Great Britain.
>
> 'I believe that the labor unions make for smoother relations. Without labor unions our strike last week [the rail strike] would have been a civil war. It was the control of the men by their leaders which made it a peaceful struggle.'

This function of strike-control was stressed by Sir Hartley Shawcross in the Commons early in 1946.[3] We have realized, he said, because of our experience of unofficial strikes during the war, that it is utterly impossible to prohibit strikes and prevent them by the processes of the criminal law; and it is partly because of that very fact that 'most people nowadays realize that it is in the interests, not only of industry but of the State to have strong and powerful trade unions of which all the workers in industry are members, and which are able to guide and lead their members.'

A very strong reason for the 'enlightened employer's' approval of Trade Unions is that without the Unions there can be no authoritative negotiation. Recognition of this fact has been slow to develop, although as early as 1899 an experienced conciliator[4] saw that it was coming: 'there is now developing a recognition that not only is a union a reasonable institution, but that it is in large organized trades an essential authority to secure the due observance of wages contracts or awards, and that hence it is to the interest of the employer that membership of the union should be as wide and general as possible'. Since then, the argument of mutual convenience has been used with increasing frequency.[5]

[1] Quoted in P.E.P. *Planning* No. 221 (May 12th, 1944).

[2] Cabled interview with Lord Northcliffe published in New York *Sun* (October 8th, 1919), and quoted in *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike of* 1919 (New York, 1921), p. 151.

[3] February 12th.

[4] SIR DAVID DALE, *Thirty Years Experience of Industrial Conciliation* (1899).

[5] E.g. documents quoted by Milne-Bailey, *Trade Union Documents* (1929), pp. 458-9 (electricity supply and London Transport). The London General Omnibus Company had undertaken to point out to new employees the advantages of Union membership, and to call lapsed members into the office and use 'moral suasion' to make them rejoin (see *The Times*, January 8th, 1929).

John Hilton reported in 1935[1] that employers throughout the electrical industry were 'emphatic' in their approval of strong Trade Unions, firstly 'as a safeguard against the Communist element' and secondly because

> 'the employers believe that the Joint Industrial Councils are of great benefit to the trade, and these can only function properly if both employers and workers are so organized that their representatives can speak with unquestioned authority.'

(The Cable Makers' Association felt so strongly about this that they had twice issued pamphlets to their workers pointing out that J.I.C.s were impossible without Trade Unions, and that therefore it was the business of the employers to see that they had proper Trade Union representation.)

This attitude is, of course, by no means universal. An anachronistic example of the Document created a *furore* in the London building trade in 1914; after the great engineering lockout of 1922, pressure was put on A.E.U. foremen to leave the A.E.U. and join the Foremen's Mutual Benefit Society;[2] and there are still big sections of industry where Trade Union membership has to be fought for. 'Even the best employers', said the Assistant General Secretary of the T.U.C. as recently as 1947, 'look upon the trade unions as a medicine necessary perhaps, but only to be taken on special occasions and in limited quantities. And the worst employers look upon us as a confounded nuisance to be avoided if at all possible. When our trade unions have achieved recognition they have still had to fight hard for the establishment of adequate machinery for joint negotiation.'[3]

All in all, however, employers' attitudes have been changing steadily. It has even been suggested that they should make themselves responsible for the continued Trade Union membership of their workers by 'checking off' — i.e. deducting — Trade Union contributions from wages, thus maintaining a closed shop and avoiding all strikes on this issue.[4] Although this arrangement is 'logical' enough, many Trade Unionists have found it objectionable as running contrary to the tradition of voluntary organization.

Trade Union attitudes to Employers' Organizations have been undergoing a corresponding change. 'Is it not true', said Mr. Bevin at the 1927 Congress, 'that the Trade Unions of this country have in very many cases been compelled to organize the employers themselves in order to get them together in associations? Is it not also true that when Trade Unionism has come into an industry one of its first tasks has been to get some semblance of organization, not only

[1] *Are Trade Unions Obstructive?* (1935), p. 131.

[2] See Jefferys, *The Story of the Engineers* (1945), p. 225. Similar pressure had been attempted in earlier struggles.

[3] Mr. George Woodcock, in a broadcast, January 18th, 1947 (version printed in *Labour* (March-April 1947), p. 210).

[4] See *The Times* (July 11th, 1946). (Cf. the compulsory deduction of 'sliding scale pence' —a contribution towards the working of joint negotiating machinery—in South Wales, and the similar deduction from the wages of Midland ironworkers, mentioned by the Webbs (*Industrial Democracy*, pp. 210-11.) The 'check-off' was, in fact, operated in the South Wales coalfield when the industry was nationalized, Trade Union membership being a condition of employment in that and several other districts. The N.C.B. has since agreed to deduct Trade Union members' contributions from wages, though not to make membership universally compulsory.

on its own side, but also on the employers' side, and in hundreds of cases they have had to rescue the industry itself from self-destruction, from stupid competition, and the wrong handling of its affairs?'

Special case of the Co-operative Societies

One might have expected that the Co-operative movement would have set the pace for improved employer-worker relations, and it is perhaps an irony of Labour history that this is not so. In view of the origins and history of the Co-operatives (some societies, for example, being set up by Trade Unionists on strike or locked out so as to make them independent of hostile shopkeepers), and of their place in the Labour movement, the Co-operative employer is clearly not as other employers are: 'every dispute', said Mr. Hallsworth to the 1921 T.U.C., 'we fail to settle with the co-operative movement is, in my judgment, a reflection upon us all.' Co-operative wages and conditions have, recently at any rate, been somewhat higher and better than in comparable trades outside; the movement took the lead, for example, in the establishment of the weekly half-holiday, of men's minimum wages, and (under pressure from N.U.D.A.W.) of compulsory Trade Union membership.

Moreover, the Co-operative movement has often shown its solidarity with the Trade Unions. During the Irish transport strike of 1913 the C.W.S., on the guarantee of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., delivered within three days a shipload of food in aid of 25,000 families affected by the strike, and continued to send further supplies during the next four months. Again, in the great disputes of 1919, 1921 and 1926, the C.W.S. arranged to make cash immediately available so that the Unions banking with it could pay strike benefit. In the 1919 railway strike the C.W.S. printing department was hard put to it to get the necessary cheques out in time; the C.W.S. bank made N.U.R. cheques payable at the various Co-operative Societies; and it was possibly only the prompt action of the Co-operative Societies, in agreeing to honour vouchers issued by local strike committees, that prevented the Government from operating a project of starving out the railwaymen's families by withdrawing their ration cards or withholding the food supplies under its control.[1] In the coal strikes of 1921 and 1926 the Societies granted extensive credit; and in the great cotton textile strikes of 1932, in order to avoid long-term credits and bad debts, the T.U.C. itself, which was acting as the co-ordinating body of a national fund for the strikers, arranged its own voucher system with the Co-operatives.[2]

One authority has maintained that the loyalty of the Co-operative movement to the Trade Unions has been less-than-reciprocated on the Trade Union side, where 'little distinction has hitherto been made . . . between co-operative societies and capitalist employers'.[3] Cole, on the other hand, writing shortly after the labour conflicts of the Co-operative movement had reached their height, was not prepared wholly to absolve the Societies from blame. The Societies were 'by no means model employers'; and the Unions catering for their employees, 'so far from finding agitation unnecessary, have quite often to

[1] See WEBB, *History of Trade Unionism* (1926 edn.), p. 541.
[2] T.U.C. *Report* (1932), p. 88.
[3] CARR SAUNDERS, SARGANT FLORENCE and PEERS, *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain* (1938), p. 44.

take up an aggressive industrial attitude'; strikes occurred less often than in private employment but 'more frequently than ought to be necessary under a democratic employer'; and in general the relations between the Co-operative Societies and their employees differed very little from those which obtained outside.[1]

Until the end of the 1914 war, the chief Trade Union concerned was the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees. This Union, formed in the middle 'nineties, did not become fully militant until shortly before the war. In 1911 it established a strike fund, and then, tackling one Society at a time, carried through a vigorous 'bumper' strike movement to secure a minimum wage scale. Since, however, it claimed to cater for all Co-operative workers, the A.U.C.E. became engaged in a bitter dispute with other Unions; and in 1912 the T.U.C. Disputes Committee ruled that the A.U.C.E. should commit virtual suicide by handing over all its members who could be catered for by other recognized and affiliated Unions. The decision was not implemented, and the dispute persisted; and in 1916 the A.U.C.E. left the T.U.C., with general support from Guild Socialist and Syndicalist circles. The T.U.C. continued to inveigh against the A.U.C.E.; the other Unions concerned formed a National Federation of Unions Catering for Co-operative Employees in the effort to break it; in 1918 the C.W.S., taking its cue from the T.U.C. decisions, tried to make it a condition of employment at the various printing works that the workers joined 'the Unions applicable to their respective crafts'; and in the same year a 'labour department' was formed with the object of defeating the A.U.C.E.'s 'bumper' strike tactics. But the A.U.C.E. was too strong to be broken.

By 1921, with the amalgamation of the A.U.C.E. and the Warehouse Workers' Union to form the N.U.D.A.W., and with the affiliation of this Union to the T.U.C., the recognition issue was settled; but the struggle had cost the A.U.C.E. and the Co-operatives dear. Feeling was bitter: 'I have never had worse treatment', said a speaker to the 1921 Trades Union Congress, 'in all my seven years negotiation with private employers than I have had from some members of co-operative societies'; 'the Co-operative Union Limited', said another, 'cannot prevent lockouts. They are constantly taking place . . . we were actually charged with a strike at Newcastle-on-Tyne which was a lockout over the whole of the Northern area'.[2]

Strikes and lockouts on a considerable scale, and on many issues, were threatened and called for some years. The struggle was acrimonious and unedifying, despite the efforts of the T.U.C. to mediate. In 1923 the C.W.S. called for the 'unconditional surrender' of N.U.D.A.W., charging it with 'seeking first to enforce conditions on the Co-operative Movement which it did not expect from private employers and, secondly, to put itself in a privileged position as compared with the fifty-eight other Unions which have members in the C.W.S.'; the N.U.D.A.W. countered by accusing the C.W.S. of 'sweating', and 'desiring to undermine the Union'. In 1924 N.U.D.A.W.'s claim for a wage increase was

[1] *Organized Labour* (1924), p. 111. For the detail of labour disputes in the Co-operative movement during these years, see *Labour Research* and COLE, *A Century of Co-operation* (1944), ch. xx.

[2] Mr. W. Mackinder and Mr. J. Hallsworth, of N.U.D.A.W.; T.U.C. *Report* (1921), pp. 230, 235.

met by a counterclaim for a wage reduction, and the negotiating machinery proved unequal to the strain.[1]

But the cleavage between Trade Unions and Co-operatives was most forcibly illustrated by the 1926 General Strike. (The Co-operative movement refused to bind itself to specific arrangements with the Unions until the very eve of the strike.) Co-operative workers were called out, the movement paying the price of a high degree of organization, while at the same time the Unions were asking the Societies and the C.W.S. for every kind of assistance.

A committee set up in 1928 by the Co-operative Union and the T.U.C. General Council, and bidden to 'formulate proposals intended to promote closer harmony between the two movements and to prevent the repetition of events which occurred during the national strike of 1926', unanimously recommended

> '... that the principle is accepted, that the relations between the trade union movement and the co-operative movement, with regard to questions arising on the terms and conditions of employment, must be based upon a different policy to that ordinarily applied to the private capitalist undertakings, so far as strikes and lock-outs are concerned. Provided that the co-operative societies are recognizing and applying recognized trade from union rates of wages, hours and working conditions, they shall be immune from strikes and lock-outs in respect of such matters.'

But the mutual suspicions of the Societies and N.U.D.A.W. tended to poison the atmosphere of Joint (management) Councils, where they did not prevent their establishment; and the movement has been by no means immune from strikes, even though these were not large enough to figure in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette's* lists of Principal Disputes until 1941. After the end of the second world war there was another outbreak of fairly big strikes (in clothing, laundry, wholesale tea distribution, and retail distribution of milk, groceries, meat and drapery). On the whole, to judge from the lists of Principal Disputes, relations were somewhat better in Co-operative manufacturing than in comparable trades outside, but considerably worse in retail distribution. Ellen Wilkinson[2] asserted that good wages and conditions, and security of job-tenure, have given the Co-operative movement the pick of the workers in the distributive trade; but their industrial militancy and political zeal[3] seem to have been whetted by the privilege of working for a not-strictly-capitalist concern.

Top-level employer-worker collaboration after the General Strike

While the Co-operative Societies complained that the Unions treated them worse than capitalist firms during the General Strike, it was the collapse of the

[1] The new conciliation machinery, set up in 1927 to replace the old Joint Committee of Trade Unionists and Co-operators, was hardly more successful. While reference of disputes to the old Joint Committee had not been compulsory, if a dispute was submitted to it a decision had to be reached – if not by agreement then by the chairman. Under the 1927 machinery, on the other hand, reference of disputes was compulsory but settlement was not – the chairman not being competent to give a decision unless both sides agreed to his doing so. It was not until the end of 1937 that the Unions and the C.W.S. agreed on a special conciliation board for their internal disputes.

[2] In *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), p. 473.

[3] During the period of operation of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act, N.U.D.A.W.'s percentage of contracting-in members was high (87 per cent in 1937).

General Strike, more than anything else, which accelerated the change of heart between employers and Trade Unions in industry as a whole. There had, of course, been many previous attempts to make provision for top-level collaboration and the avoidance of strikes — for instance, the proposal for an Industrial Union of Employers and Employed of 1894; the short-lived National Alliance of Employers and Employed of 1917, with its subordinate joint committees; and the Industrial Parliament proposals of 1919.[1] But these left little mark on industrial relations compared with the Mond-Turner conferences which followed the General Strike. Not that the Mond-Turner proposal for a National Industrial Council came to anything; the T.U.C., in face of the opposition of A. J. Cook and other Left-wing leaders, were prepared to accept it, but the two great employers' organizations eventually rejected it, apparently considering (wrote Cole) that there was no need to offer the Unions even the very subordinate part in shaping economic policy which Mond had been ready to give them. But if the Mond-Turner conferences achieved no formal result, they certainly had a very strong effect on the outlook of the Trade Union leadership. Since 1926, and especially since the downfall of the second Labour Government in 1931, official Trade Unionism 'has endeavoured, not to challenge capitalism, but to make terms with it; and it has regarded as its worst enemies not the employers, but those Trade Unionists who have endeavoured to recall it to a more militant policy'.[2]

The attitude of the Trade Union leadership during the General Strike has been variously attributed to sanity, treachery, patriotism, weakness and the like.[3] But after the strike was over it was clear that the morale as well as the finances[4] of the movement had been hit, and it is not surprising that a doctrine of industrial peace-at-any-price was adopted by the T.U.C. Nor, perhaps, was it wholly surprising to find Sir Alfred Mond — later Lord Melchett — of Imperial Chemicals as the protagonist of peace on the other side, since 'the continuous nature of many chemical processes means that a strike causes severe dislocation and is therefore a powerful weapon in this particular sector of industry, and in any case the central position of the chemical industry, in a modern economy, particularly in wartime, makes industrial peace a particularly vital interest'.[5] 'If there is one thing in the world which is dead in this country', wrote Mond at the time, anxious to bury the hatchet of his political opponents, 'it is socialism . . . The Red grows thinner. Like a chewed bit of sweet a child sucks in his mouth, it gets pinker and gradually white and thinner all the time. Therefore, it is our opportunity, if we have the courage to take it, to preach our gospel to the country. There is one gospel to preach today; Conciliation, Co-operation, Recognition — these are the lines on which we want to go. . . .'[6]

[1] Outlined in the *Recommendations of the Provisional Joint Committee of the Industrial Conference*, 1919 (*Cmd.* 501).

[2] Cole, *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), pp. 76-7.

[3] By a tactical coincidence, critics of the extreme Right as well as of the extreme Left castigated Union leaders for treachery. Compare the attitude of a Conservative pamphlet (*The Great Betrayal – 40 Points on the General Strike*) with the verdict of the Communist International's *Thesis on the Lessons of the English General Strike*.

[4] The N.U.R., for example, which had an adverse balance of £747,000 at the end of 1926, was still paying for its share in the General Strike in 1934-35 (see *The Times*, June 7th, 1934).

[5] *Britain Without Capitalists* (anonymous authors, 1936), p. 299f.

[6] *Industry and Politics* (1927), pp. 65-6.

The characteristic features of 'Mondism' amounted to an acceptance of capitalist industry as having a promising future, a disapproval of strikes, and a consequent willingness to support policies that would make industry pay.[1] The T.U.C., to quote the General Council's report to the 1928 Congress,[2] was against any reversion to all-out industrial struggle as 'futile, certain to fail, and sure to lead to bloodshed and misery'. The alternative traditional policy of 'standing aside and telling employers to get on with their own job, while the unions would pursue the policy of fighting sectionally for improvements' was also objected to as a 'futile policy' and a 'confession of failure' — it was 'entirely inconsistent with the modern demand for a completely altered status of the workers in industry'. The General Council claimed, however, that it was up to the Trade Union movement 'to say boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it is going to have a voice in the way industry is carried on . . . the unions can use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganization of industry'.[3]

Although the policy of industrial peace met with resistance, the Unions' leadership was prepared to deal firmly with dissenters. As a British fraternal delegate from the N.U.G. & M.W. told the Los Angeles Conference of the A.F. of L. in 1927, when strong London branches refused to obey the General Council's instructions,

> 'Well, Mr. President, we simply smashed the branches . . . We had on our General Council two men who represented great areas in our country, but they were going to Minority meetings, and we said: "sign a declaration or get out".'

President Green of the A.F. of L. replied:

> 'We were made happy when we listened to those words. We felt that our own position had been thoroughly vindicated that the traditional course of the American Federation of Labour had found additional approval from our older brothers across the sea.'[4]

'Mondism' certainly left a deep impression on the leadership of Trade Unionism. It modified the spirit, if not the letter, of the 'right to strike'; and the militant springs of Trade Unionism were, perhaps at some cost to the movement, dammed or diverted. As a British writer pointed out in an American journal,[5]

> 'Where you have labor leaders "cöoperating" with employers in running industry, two reactions among their followers tend to ensue. The first is one of suspicion — that the leaders are more careful of their own interests than of those of the men whom they are supposed to represent. Every settlement becomes a "sell out" and the Union comes to be regarded as no more than an extension of the firm's "Labour Management Department" —

[1] In 1930 a joint memorandum of the F.B.I. and the T.U.C. General Council was sent to the Imperial Conference, urging an Empire economic bloc and the need for tariffs.

[2] 1928 *Report*, p. 209f.

[3] This choice of objectives had in fact been made some nine months earlier by Lord – then Mr. – Citrine, secretary to the T.U.C. from 1925, in an article published in the *Manchester Guardian Supplement*, dated November 30th, 1927.

[4] Quoted in *Labour Monthly*, vol. X, No. 4 (1928), p. 203.

[5] E. M. Hugh-Jones, in *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February 1939), p. 211.

which in many cases is precisely what the employer wants it to be. At this point comes the second reaction — a sense of loss . . . As cöoperation proceeds and unions become, as in England, "constitutional and conservative", "supports", it has been said, "of a decaying capitalism", the worker's suspicion is given a keener edge by the feeling that he has lost one of the few things that really belonged to him. Naturally, therefore, he seeks to find some other organization which shall not merely be more active, but, which is fundamentally more important, can be felt to be his own. It is this feeling that has been responsible for the epidemic of "unofficial" strikes which have from time to time in the last few years broken out in England, led by so-called "rank and file" movements.'

Low-level collaboration: joint consultation

The effect of the Mond-Turner conferences in changing workers' attitudes to employers was thus largely confined to the top level; at the other end of the scale there was much less evidence of a change of attitude. There is, of course, no doubt that the collaboration of employers and workers in joint consultation at low level has played a part in maintaining industrial peace; but up to 1946 it made little headway except in wartime.

In the past, apart from Robert Owen and his imitators, few employers have seriously attempted to secure the general co-operation of their workers in the planning and regulation of work.[1] Joint consultation has been stimulated by war, since war conditions strengthen workers' bargaining power as well as providing a more convincing community of interest between employer and worker. But when the war ends the main stimulus is gone; and even in wartime, managerial exhortations to 'Play for the side' are apt to be met with the rejoinder 'whose b—— side — yours or ours?'[2]

During the first world war the Whitley Committee, faced by persistent unrest and the workers' insistence on 'industrial self-government' or at least participation in management, hoped to improve industrial relations by promising workers 'a great measure of participation in the discussion about and adjustment of those parts of industry by which they are most affected'. By the end of 1918 it was reported that Works Committees[3] had been established, to some extent at least, in most industries where a National Joint Industrial Council had been formed; by the end of 1921 the number of such Committees was over a thousand; but thereafter most of them passed away because of Trade Union disillusionment and employers' apathy.[4] Only on the railways was a coherent system of Local Departmental Committees set up, by the 1921 Act, in stations or depots where more than 75 workers were employed. The second world war produced a bigger

[1] Mr. H. C. Briggs, for example, in evidence before the 1867 Royal Commission, claimed to have introduced a sort of Joint Production Committee in his colliery at Normanton (*6th Report*, p. 50); but it is doubtful whether this, like his short-lived profit-sharing scheme – participation in which was barred to Union members – was more than window-dressing at best. There were a number of big strikes at Briggs's during the 1850s and 1860s: 'all coal masters is devils, but Briggs is the prince of devils'. (See BENJAMIN JONES, *Co-operative Production* (1894), p. 49f.)

[2] See anecdote in NAOMI JACOB's *Me* (Hutchinson edn.), p. 136.

[3] In Britain the scheme was based on the Unions; in the U.S.A., where an analogous development took place, it was not.

[4] See, for example, DUCKSOO CHANG, *British Methods of Industrial Peace* (New York, 1936), ch. v, where these developments are appraised.

outcrop of low-level consultative bodies, in the form of Joint Production Committees. These, to the number of some 4500 in 1944, covered more than 3,500,000 workers (other than clerical) in M.A.P. and R.O.F. factories, shipyards, dockyards and Services' industrial establishments, mining, building,[1] transport, and chemicals.[2] (Quite a large proportion of these committees were in small firms: 1600 of them in establishments with less than 150 workers.) Writers here and in the U.S.A., where a parallel growth of 'labor management councils' took place, were enthusiastic: the technique of 'conveying information to employees', if not participation in management, was pronounced 'the most fundamental of all techniques in the labour management field',[3] and it was expected once more that joint consultation at the factory level had come to stay. Yet even during the war, when employers were more amenable — since they were often able to make considerable concessions which could be passed on to the Government in higher prices — it had to be admitted that a number of the J.P.C.s were 'façade committees'. The 1942 A.E.U. survey,[4] while it approved the development strongly, pointed out that some 12 per cent of the Joint Production Committees surveyed never discussed production at all, and that the bad Joint Production Committee

> 'is an Absenteeism Court, an occasion for the management to harangue the workers' representatives on their obligations and duties, a secret cabal whose mysteries are never reported outside the committee room, a conspiracy between foremen and managements to speed up production without interference from below, or a futile and highly infrequent gathering of workers' and management representatives at which suggestions are made and grievances aired merely to be ignored, while any actual increases in production represent an immediate cutting of rates and worsening of conditions for the workers.'

While this was clearly not true of all J.P.C.s, at the end of the war many of them collapsed from inanition. The continuance of a state of economic emergency and the presence in power of a friendly Government did however hold Trade Union enthusiasm to some extent. Mr. Herbert Morrison told an audience of Birmingham industrialists in 1947[5] that 'a number of progressive firms have shown great ingenuity and skill in expressing their objectives, their financial position, and what happens to their products, in simple, striking terms that every worker can understand. This is not an easy task, but if successfully tackled it pays a big dividend . . . in better works relations'. But he pointed out that the majority of firms made no provision for joint consultation, since many employers and some trade unionists felt that joint production committees were 'a waste of time or even sheer eyewash'. One reason, less frequently expressed,

[1] In 1943, 'joint site committees' existed on all large jobs over £100,000 in value, but on only 11 per cent of those below.

[2] See *British Joint Production Machinery* (1943), *I.L.O. Studies and Reports, Series A (Industrial Relations)*, No. 43.

[3] HERON, *Sharing Information with Employees* (1942), p. v.

[4] *A.E.U. Third Report on Production: Enquiry into Production Committees* (PE/429, December, 1942), p. 41. The survey covered 1,000 establishments (881 firms, employing 1,258,010 workers); 550 establishments, employing 73 per cent of the workers, had J.P.C.s, the rest did not.

[5] Reported in *The Times* (October 14th, 1947).

for Trade Union apathy was given by a *Times* correspondent;[1] in the boot and shoe industry, while the Union favours joint consultation in theory, it makes little effort to bring it about, 'partly no doubt because it is a union which bans Communists from holding office and is unwilling they should have the chance of gaining influence in the workshops'. In any case, low-level joint consultation tends to make the worker less dependent on his union.

Thus for one reason or another, and notwithstanding considerable effort and the introduction of resolutions calling for compulsory Joint Production Committees, in 1948 the General Council of the T.U.C. was 'forced to the conclusion that over wide sections of industry these joint bodies are not being formed with the enthusiasm that Congress resolutions would appear to indicate';[2] and while consultative machinery has been fairly firmly established in nationalized industries, it is still too early to appraise its success.[3] Generally speaking, the collaboration of employers and workers has come from the top downwards and, wartime experience always excepted, there has been little low-level check on strikes by these means.

Attempts have, however, been made by employers to secure their workers' collaboration and loyalty irrespective of the Trade Unions, and these 'substitutes for Trade Unionism' must now be considered in the light of their possible effect on strikes.

Employers' substitutes for Trade Unionism

Company Unionism

> 'An umbrella, held by the employer, which can be shut, to leave the staff out in the rain.'
>
> Mr. Henry Levitt, General Secretary of the Guild of Insurance Officials, on 'internal organizations' (Company Unions), reported in *News Chronicle*, May 20th, 1947.

One of the more ambitious schemes in this field was the so-called General Labour Union, registered in 1890,[4] which was to consist of 'capitalists, directly or indirectly employing labour . . . and of workmen employed by them', and to be controlled by a Grand Council of which an employer was the President and a worker Vice-President. This organization was primarily designed to prevent strikes and lockouts; it was, incidentally, to provide an organized reserve pool of labour, the workers' docility being assured by a pensions and insurance scheme.

Company Unions proper, confined to a single firm, are in essential respects similar. They have usually been characterized by (*a*) an abrogation of the right to organize and to strike and (*b*) a high rate of benefits, subsidized by the 'House', which are forfeited by striking. They developed more strongly in the U.S.A.,[5]

[1] *The Times* (September 24th, 1948).

[2] *Report of the T.U.C. General Council on Productivity*, November 18th, 1948.

[3] See, for example, ZWEIG, *Men in the Pits* (1948), chap. XXXI.

[4] See *Report of Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892 (C.6708 v.), vol. XXXV, Appendix XLIV. For the working of this tactic of the shipowners and port employers, see HALÉVY, *History of the English People* 1895-1905 (1929), p. 249. A similar organization was attempted by engineering employers in 1852.

[5] See *U.S. Department of Labor Bulletin*, No. 634 (*Characteristics of Company Unions*, 1935), pp. 51, 83 and *passim*.

especially during the first world war and after 1933 (until they were checked by New Deal legislation); in Britain the main development, such as it was, took place following industrial unrest: e.g. after 1919 and 1926.[1]

A sub-committee, set up to investigate employers' pension schemes in general, some of which may be considered as embryonic company unions, reported to the T.U.C. in 1922[2] that these schemes were not a menace to the Unions till 1917, but that then the employers, taking advantage of the growing specialization of industry, had been deliberately attempting to skim off the supervisory grades of workers. In many such schemes workers were required to give up their Trade Union membership before they were admitted. (Details had already been given to an earlier Congress[3] of the establishment of this kind of scheme in various coalfields at the end of the war; a West Yorkshire example, designed to cater for deputies, firemen and examiners, forbade membership of 'any society or association which constitutionally or by its conduct resembles a Trade Union'.) The 1922 sub-committee made the startling allegation that sums of £150 to £200 were placed to the credit of men who had deserted their Union for the Foremen's Mutual Benefit Society.

The main purport of these schemes, thought the sub-committee, was to prevent strikes: any extensive enrolment of the lower supervisory grades 'would, especially in a period of trade depression, constitute a potent factor in rendering strike action taken by craft or other unions ineffective'; 'it is quite evident that members of these "patronage societies", formed, developed, and to a large extent controlled by the employers, are to be used for the purpose of protecting the interests of the employers during trade disputes'.

As a consequence of the calling out of the printers during the General Strike, a number of printing and paper firms decided to break the power of Trade Unionism. Four Glasgow daily papers refused to recognize Unions; London newspapers insisted strongly on their managerial rights, and threatened to lock out all Union men if contracts were again broken by striking without due notice; His Majesty's Stationery Office announced its intention of establishing an open shop, as also did two big London newspaper-distributing firms; and the *Manchester Guardian* set up a 'house' organization.[4] Certain other firms in the paper trade formed Company Unions at this time.

Similar organizations have been found in other trades; for example, in rubber, catering, clothing, musical instrument making, cables and wireless and municipal employment. In banking, although the Bank Officers' Guild — now affiliated to the T.U.C. — had, in its first circular of February 1918, described itself as 'not a militant trade union, but a *guild*, conciliatory in its methods and broad enough to take in the whole profession from managers to junior clerks',[5] the managements of the larger banks — particularly in view of the Irish bank strike of the following year — were so anxious to prevent the formation of a national organization of any kind that they countered by establishing separate staff organizations. Several insurance companies set up similar bodies.

An important Company Union was established by Mr. G. A. Spencer, mainly

[1] See *Labour Research Department 'White Paper'*, No. 25 (October 1926).
[2] T.U.C. *Report* (1922), pp. 179-81.
[3] T.U.C. *Report* (1920), pp. 384-6.
[4] See CROOK, *The General Strike* (1931), p. 464f.
[5] See KLINGENDER, *Clerical Labour in Britain* (1935), p. 33.

in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, after the General Strike.[1] This 'Notts. and District Miners' Industrial Union' was, to quote the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies,[2] 'financially assisted for pension purposes by colliery owners', and superannuation benefit formed the bulk of its expenditure. The T.U.C. objected strongly, and in a T.U.C. ballot 32,277 votes were cast for the existing Notts. Miners' Association and only 2533 for Spencer's Union; but Spencer appealed to membership figures.[3] Spencer had had assistance from the National Union of Seamen, a Union which, under Havelock Wilson's leadership, refused to come out in the General Strike,[4] and had thereafter tactfully resigned from the International Transport Workers' Federation. It was next disaffiliated from the T.U.C. by the 1928 Congress for having helped Spencer's Union by lending the sum of £10,000, loaning officials and motor cars, and issuing a journal for it from the Seamens' Union offices — incidentally expelling eight of its officials who raised objections on this score. Legal cases, brought to dispute the propriety of the £10,000 loan, failed: the Courts refused to interfere by means of an injunction.[5]

In fact, at the time when the T.U.C. was participating in the Mond-Turner Conferences, a campaign was launched for 'non-political' Unions: funds were to be collected to promote them, and to finance legal attacks on existing Unions; an appeal went out over Havelock Wilson's name, stressing the need 'to counteract the foreign influences at work in favour of foreign-controlled communist domination'; and a remarkable assemblage of peers, knights, baronets, company- and bank-directors, together with the representatives of some 93 firms, are said to have appeared as backers.[6] The aristocratic fervour abated, however; and after Havelock Wilson's death in 1929 the Seamen's Union was again affiliated to the T.U.C. (1930), on a promise being given never again to provide support 'moral, financial or otherwise' to the 'non-political' Union or to any Unions associated therewith.

Spencer's Union had, however, achieved a firm hold by this time, and it took some years of unrest for the hold to be loosened. The Union's existence was in fact the main underlying issue of the Harworth strike of 1937, as was pointed out

[1] Company Unionism was also found in the South Wales coalfield; see, for example, M. SLATER, *Stay-Down Miner* (1936), pp. 21-31. It was, however, confined to a single colliery by 1938, and was later eradicated.

[2] 1937 *Report*, Part 4, p. 3.

[3] See *The Times* (May 7th, 1928). In its first year, Spencer's Union numbered 12,853 members; by 1937 the figure was 17,179. By contrast, the N.M.A. had 34,767 members in 1925; it lost all but 10,000 in 1926; it regained 6,600 in 1927, but numbers declined – in circumstances described below – to 9,790 in 1937.

[4] The Seamen's Union had been flatly opposed to strikes for some years (and was challenged for a time by a rival Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union); ironically enough, it had been singled out as the recipient of a bundle of propaganda leaflets in 1919, headed with the inquiry 'Why not join the Genoese seamen in a sympathetic strike?' The N.U.S. 'ticket' (known as the P.C.5), since it involved compulsory membership of a Union whose contacts with the shipowners excited suspicion, was the subject of disputes over a number of years. (See, for example, the T.U.C. *Report* for 1923, pp. 191, 289f; and also the account of an unusually violent seamen's strike at South Shields, in *Labour Monthly* for September 1930).

[5] *Cotter and others v. National Union of Seamen and others* (1928); *Cotter v. National Union of Seamen* (1929). See *Reports of Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies*, 1928 (4, p. 10) and 1929 (4, p. 4).

[6] See *Labour Research Department 'White Paper'*, No. 40 (*The Non-Politicals*, April 1928). Havelock Wilson was a member of the 'Industrial Peace Union of the British Empire'.

by a report of the National Council for Civil Liberties[1] describing the background and events of the strike:

> 'It is alleged, on the one hand, that the Spencer Union is a Company Union and that the employers' policy of recruiting members for it, and of refusing recognition to the Notts. Miners' Association, was inspired by the desire to develop a "tame" Union and to destroy a free one; on the Employers' side, however, it is said that the Spencer Union was the only really representative body and, since they were not prepared to negotiate with more than one Union at a time, that was the Union to which all their employees had to belong. This is the dominating issue of the dispute.
>
> 'In November 1936 therefore a secret ballot was held to determine the question... The result was that 1175 voted for the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association and only 145 for the Spencer Union. The Company, however, remained adamant and continued to refuse recognition to the N.M.A....
>
> '... the fact that the village is practically owned by the Company places the men at a serious disadvantage in their struggle....... Both the Church and the Parish hall are built on ground belonging to the Colliery Company... only on one occasion, at the beginning of the strike, were the miners or their wives allowed to use the parish hall... to discuss any issues connected with the strike. I am satisfied that the Company have used their economic power to deprive the men of their civil right of freedom of assembly.'

The strike persisted for six months; some of the leaders were imprisoned; membership of the Spencer Union was still being made a condition of employment at some collieries. Eventually however the M.F.G.B. took a national ballot and decided by a large majority in favour of a general stoppage;[2] and finally the form of compromise was reached under which the Spencer Union was absorbed into the N.M.A and M.F.G.B. – certain two-year concessions being made to its existing officials.

In the same year, as a result of two resolutions passed by the Non-Manual Workers requesting that 'every available means be taken to check the growth of "house" Unions', the T.U.C. sent a questionnaire to all its affiliated Unions with a view to the compilation of a Report and the inauguration of a campaign if this proved necessary. Fifty-eight replies were received, of which thirty-eight disclaimed any knowledge of such organizations; as might be expected, it was mainly in those fields – notably in banking – where Trade Unionism proper had failed to penetrate that Company Unionism had won its support. Since few organizations gave any information at all, and this was usually sketchy, no Report was issued; and the T.U.C. could hardly take action on complaints by unaffiliated bodies. But the very variety of the organizations whose activities were reported to the T.U.C. (Company Unions proper, staff associations, 'welfare' schemes, 'social' schemes, profit-sharing schemes, 'Plans of Co-operation' and so on) reveals the extent to which employers' organizations catering for

[1] RONALD KIDD, *A Report to the Executive Committee of the National Council for Civil Liberties* (March 1937).

[2] See T.U.C. *Report* (1937), pp. 37-8.

workers have been suspect; in one case complaint was made of good conditions in employing firms (!) as favouring the establishment of Company Unionism.[1]

Borderline cases of Company Unionism are, of course, not uncommon. The 'Printing Trades Alliance', for example, was formed of both employers and workers, and was described as a Whitley Council conducted 'on the lines of a Trade Union' (it was registered as such), 'carrying out every one of the principles for which Trade Unionism was brought into being'.[2] Employers had to guarantee to pay 'Fair Wages Clause' rates, and strikes and lockouts were forbidden. Disputes went to a joint conciliation committee, and failing agreement to an arbitrator appointed by the London Chamber of Commerce.

Again, a Court of Inquiry on unofficial strikes in Smithfield Market issued a Report (*Cmd.* 6932) in 1946 in which the T. & G.W.U. asserted that the primary cause of unrest was the existence of a 'Smithfield Guild of Clerks and Salesmen', whose formation in 1938[3] was suspected as having been supported by employers to prevent these workers being organized by the T. & G.W.U. The T. & G.W.U.'s attitude was that 'so far as unrest had occurred and was likely to continue it was due to factors which were largely outside their control, factors of a psychological nature which engendered a state of dispute'. The Court maintained that although there was no proof 'either that the Guild is not in fact a *bona fide* organization or that it is a mere instrument of the employers', 'its genesis and the manner in which it was subsequently administered were such as to raise suspicion in the minds of the Transport and General Workers' Union membership'. The Court, however, felt obliged to point out that the Guild's original rules, which forbade striking, were amended in 1941 so that 'today the Guild may if it so desires take strike action in support of a demand and in this respect is now in a position to exercise one of the functions of a recognized Trade Union'.

Some writers — W. J. Brown, for example — have stressed the 'Company Union trend' of certain of the Unions catering for the Civil Service: a suspicion deriving from the special restrictions on striking, and gaining force from the disaffiliation of the Civil Service Unions from the T.U.C. from 1927 to 1946. Others have pointed out that in practice Workshop Committees have often savoured of Company Unionism: a resolution submitted by the United Rubber Workers to the 1946 Congress (and carried) stated:

> 'That this Congress views with concern the growth and activity of Factory Councils, and pseudo Works Committees (anti-Trade Union), and deplores the action of all Trade Unionists who support these Company-sponsored organizations. It calls on organized labour to oppose this anti-Trade Union method of factory organization.'[4]

Again, as has been said, 'welfare' schemes — particularly where the Company offers some reward for participation in sports and other schemes, or where

[1] In another case it was suggested that workers supported the Company Union because they were disgruntled at the unedifying spectacle of inter-Union rivalry.

[2] Alderman Morley (Water Workers' National Executive), reported in *Towards Industrial Peace* (1927), p. 206.

[3] See Port and Crombie, *Closed Shop* (*Pilot Papers*, vol. II, No. 3 (1947), pp. 64-5) for a discussion of the circumstances.

[4] 1946 T.U.C. *Report*, p. 378.

contributory pensions are forfeited on dismissal — have often been held suspect.

In this country however employer-control of workers by means of 'welfare' projects has never developed to the extent that it did, for example, in Germany, or more recently in the U.S.A. In Germany, the industrial revolution still bore the impress of a feudalism which had been broken in England two centuries earlier; and German factory settlements, ranging from the completely self-contained 'villages' attached to the Krupp and Siemens works to the provision of supplementary housing which was common in the Rhineland, were more widespread and on a bigger scale than anything done here at Bourneville, Port Sunlight and in certain colliery villages. Moreover, the motive of the German employers was overtly and from the start to combat Trade Unionism in general and strikes in particular, and remained so to the end: 'the command of the establishment', ran the 1930 Krupp guide, 'shall not be lost, the sympathy of the people shall not be forfeited, there shall be no strikes called'.[1] These schemes fulfilled the double function of keeping wages low and Trade Unions in abeyance.[2] In the U.S.A. such 'mill-towns' as Gary, Indiana and Longview, Washington are cases in point: 'company-owned towns', comments one writer, 'company-controlled counties, company-controlled states have long denied all civil liberties to workers who sought to organize'.[3]

In Britain, 'welfare', even in the broadest sense, has been provided (except in wartime) on a very modest scale. Although Mary Macarthur described welfare as the most unpopular word in the terminology of the factory worker,[4] Trade Union opinion has, on the whole, not had occasion to harden on the question: indeed, welfare arrangements — at least those providing for the workers while inside the works — 'are regarded as so necessary that employers are required to make many of them by law and Trade Unions are disposed to ask for rather than to resent them, though there is still a feeling that an employer should not concern himself with what happens to his employees outside his premises'.[5] Where suspicions of 'welfare' schemes have persisted, their bearing is always clear; but it is difficult to generalize in fields where experiences and opinions are so widely different. Here it is necessary to draw attention to such trends only in so far as they have affected workers' attitudes.

Profit-sharing schemes

The history of 'non-co-operative profit-sharing schemes' is a long one. Leclaire, a French painter and decorator, started a 'Society of Mutual Help' in 1838 which developed as a profit-sharing scheme; other firms in France and Belgium followed suit; attempts were made in the British building trade, and by the Christian Socialists in a number of trades — though these attempts were short-lived. But although such schemes have a long ancestry their extent has never been very impressive; even in 1936 they covered only about 220,000 workers. Symptomatically, more schemes were started in 1919 and 1920 than

[1] Quoted in BRADY, *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* (1937), p. 259f.

[2] See the summary of information received from H. M. Commercial Secretary, Berlin, cited in *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), pp. 203-4.

[3] BALDWIN, *Civil Liberties and Industrial Conflict* (Harvard, 1938), p. 16.

[4] Quoted in ANDREWS, *Economic Effects of the World War upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (1921 edn.), p. 159.

[5] *Chief Inspector of Factories: Report*, 1940 (*Cmd.* 6316), p. 13.

in any other comparable period;[1] and of 679 schemes which had been started up to 1936, 395 (58 per cent) had been discontinued by then, and new schemes were being started on a declining scale.[2]

The main cause of the collapse of such schemes is given as 'diminution of profits'. This underlines the fact that schemes are most likely to succeed in industries sheltered from competition;[3] it is significant that the highest number of participating employees (about 30 per cent of all those concerned) come from public utility undertakings. The cause of the collapse next in importance is given as 'apathy of employees or dissatisfaction of employers with results', but unfortunately it is not possible to split up this too-inclusive category. From the workers' viewpoint an average addition to earnings of 6 per cent for all schemes is small,[4] and it is not surprising to read (*Financial Times*, November 6th, 1946) that 'there seems to be very little use introducing a profit-sharing scheme unless it is associated with first-class and sustained propaganda'. On the employers' side, 'too often, it seems, schemes have been introduced in the expectation of immediate material gains' (which are in fact slow to materialize)—but most employers can point to 'an increased loyalty and contentment of their labour force'.

It is because they tend to foster employer-loyalty that these schemes have earned the suspicion of Trade Unionists in the past; although some even of the early schemes implied no antagonism to the Unions — one scheme at least appears to have made it a condition that the workers participating should be Union members.[5] When, however, the South Metropolitan Gas Company first introduced its scheme in 1889, the gasworkers' Union opposed it strongly on many grounds, but particularly because the scheme was likely to induce members to leave the Union, and also because men who were bound by the 12-monthly agreements provided for in the scheme 'would find it impossible to strike with effect'.[6] The Union insisted that the scheme should be dropped, or that those

[1] Similarly there has been some recrudescence of interest by Conservatives as well as Liberals since the end of the second world war.

[2] An obituary of many schemes may be found in the *22nd Abstract of Labour Statistics*, pp. 113-19.

[3] The pioneer scheme was that of the South Metropolitan Gas Company which began to operate in 1891; and since then such diverse firms as John Lewis, Bryant and May, London Brick, Kodak, Triplex Safety Glass, Vauxhall Motors, Reckitt and Colman, J. T. & J. Taylor, Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers, Telephone Rentals, Clarnico (Clarke Nickolls and Coombs) and others have initiated schemes. The schemes are very varied in character: some provide for annual cash bonuses, others involve employee shareholding without (or sometimes with) voting rights.

[4] The highest percentage increase on earnings through profit-sharing was found in banking, insurance and finance; the lowest in metal and textiles. Since these schemes generally based percentage increases on the actual wages of the workers participating, the schemes have been criticized for increasing the inequality, in terms of money, of the payment of different grades of workers. (See Beatrice Webb's comment in the *Minority Report of the War Cabinet Committee's Report on Women in Industry*, 1919 – *Cmd.* 135 – p. 272.) The weaknesses of profit-sharing from the point of view of providing an adequate incentive are discussed in SARGANT FLORENCE's *Labour* (1949), pp. 112-13.

[5] See H. VIVIAN, *The Partnership of Capital and Labour* (1898).

[6] *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), p. 333 and *passim*. Sir George Livesey, chairman of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, believed in 1904 that a strike of the company's workers was 'unthinkable, impossible'; 'unionists are not excluded, they are simply ignored. But in addition and more important as a safeguard, very nearly all the company's regular employees . . . of all ranks, are holders of the company's ordinary stock under the co-partnership system; in many cases their whole savings are so invested' (*Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations* (1904), *Minutes of Evidence*, Q.4333, p. 427).

who accepted it should leave the works; and a strike of almost all the firm's stokers resulted, which the management broke by filling their places.

In 1920 the John Lewis 'Partnership' was subjected to a strike, because of the alleged refusal to implement certain clauses in a recent agreement, one of which withdrew a previous rule requiring 'partners' to sign a Document pledging them not to join a Union.[1] Again, in 1922 the Lever Brothers' scheme was attacked, after it had been in operation for a number of years, by the attempted expulsion by a Union of members who had participated in the scheme; the members brought an action against the Union, and were successful after the case had gone to the Court of Appeal and finally to the House of Lords.[2] The Balfour Committee, in reviewing such cases in 1926, described the general attitude of the Unions as 'on the whole, either unfavourable or, at best, indifferent'; but since then their attitude has been somewhat modified. The Unions, wrote the *Financial Times* in the article cited above, 'are said to be suspicious, yet cases can be quoted of union officials sitting on co-partnership committees, and it is a fact that one union recently asked for the resumption of a scheme which had been stopped during the war'.

If profit-sharing schemes are regarded as competing with the Unions for the workers' loyalty, it is clear that they have failed; but they have possibly had some effect on workers' attitudes to Trade Unionism in general and strikes in particular. A latter-day enthusiast[3] has claimed that co-partnership, 'so far from providing the employer with another weapon to fight strikes, greatly decreases the likelihood of strikes ever occurring'; but it would be disingenuous to press this distinction too far. In the early 1920s, the Unions were in no doubt about the effects of profit-sharing: 'when trade disputes take place where these so-called co-partnership schemes are in operation', said a speaker to the 1923 T.U.C.,[4] 'you will find — intentionally or otherwise — that they damage the whole of the Trade Union movement'; and as far as the Unions' attitude has changed since that time, it is possible that the change is not unconnected with the change in their attitude to strikes.

* * *

Section 4: Changing role of the State in industry

So far we have considered the changing relations between workers and employers, in the light of their effect on strikes. But there is a third party which has been acquiring a dominant interest in industrial affairs. The increased participation of the State in these matters has brought it into touch with the Unions more intimately than ever before. To an increasing extent it has come to protect the worker; to an increasing extent it employs him. Not only are its

[1] See *Labour Research* (June 1920), p. 84.

[2] *Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinet Makers and Joiners and others v. Braithwaite and others* (House of Lords). See *Ministry of Labour Gazette* report (August 1922).

[3] Marples, *The Road to Prosperity* (1947), p. 129.

[4] W. A. Robinson (N.U.D.A.W.), introducing a resolution (which was carried) condemning the schemes. (See 1923 T.U.C. *Report*, pp. 388-9.) Two years later a similar resolution was carried, this time on more 'revolutionary' grounds (1925 T.U.C. *Report*, p. 437).

functions tending to overlap with traditional Trade Union functions; not only has it become the biggest employer of labour; but the Unions are acquiring something of a niche in the edifice of administration. Thus the strike, instead of being a conflict between two disputants regulated by a theoretically impartial State, is becoming more and more frequently a conflict between State and individual.

The State as provider of benefits

Although the Unions' extended provision of friendly benefits probably lessened their willingness to support strikes, it also no doubt increased their bargaining power by attracting a larger membership and giving them a greater control over it. Now, however, that the provision of social services on a nation-wide scale is an admitted necessity, the State is taking over the supply and administration of the most important of the friendly benefits with which the Unions have been concerned, rightly or wrongly, for so long. It may therefore be asked whether this emergence by the State into a traditional field of Trade Union action will not tend to weaken the hold of the Unions on their members.

Professor Hicks[1] has argued that, on the contrary, since the first world war 'all Governments have undoubtedly been strengthening the hands of the Unions, by the system of Unemployment Insurance'; not so much because the Unions would have been financially weakened by having to provide for their unemployed members as because of the persistent clause running through Insurance Acts which decrees that employment 'at a rate of wages lower, or on conditions less favourable, than those generally observed in that district by agreement between associations of employers and employees' shall not be regarded as suitable employment, refusal of which disqualifies for benefit. It is suggested that, but for this clause, it would hardly have been possible to enforce agreements in the face of heavy unemployment in certain trades, that new firms would have started up to absorb the unemployed at low wages, and that some firms which had closed down would have continued working with sweated labour. It is not possible to say how far this clause acted as a deterrent to employers; but it is questionable whether the proportion of refusals by the unemployed to take up low-paid employment was very significant,[2] since the modest scales of benefit were hardly sufficient to encourage idleness. Moreover, some of the new firms which did spring up can be said to have employed sweated labour, not so much in the form of the unemployed as of a larger proportion of women and young people. In any case employers could hardly afford, even in bad times, to repudiate agreements wholesale.

It seems more likely that the provision of unemployment insurance as well as of other social services in which Trade Unions had previously been interested, has contributed to the worker's psychological dependence on the State rather than on his Union. This in turn has probably affected his attitude to strikes.[3]

[1] *The Theory of Wages* (1932), p. 177.

[2] Even as late as 1938 the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee were reporting many cases of people working for less than they would have received in unemployment insurance.

[3] The confusion between Trade Union unemployment benefit and strike pay has been described by the WEBBS (*Industrial Democracy* (1926 edn.), pp. 94-6). State unemployment benefit, on the other hand, was for a long time rigorously refused even to those indirectly affected by strikes.

The State as regulator of wages

Increasing State intervention in the regulation of wages has possibly tended to prevent strikes, particularly among poorly organized workers who were catered for by Trade Boards.[1] Not that the desire to prevent strikes was the original motive of the formation of Trade Boards, so much as the desire to prevent sweating — and, possibly in certain trades, the desire to encourage organization by both sides.[2] However, the Whitley Committee recommended in 1917 that the powers of Trade Boards should be extended to equip them to deal with industrial unrest (although the 1918 Act did not follow up the recommendation). Moreover, the Balfour Committee's Report maintained that

> 'while strikes on a large scale are beyond the capacity of such workers [i.e. the ill-organized] sporadic outbursts, which in the aggregate may not be negligible, are likely to occur among them, and the existence of a Trade Board tends to reduce or even extinguish the likelihood of such outbursts.'[3]

Trade Boards may also have prevented strikes less directly, by discouraging Trade Union organization. Although the immediate effect may have been to give, in Sells's words, 'impetus, prestige and dignity' to Trade Unionism, the longer-term effect may have been different. Trade Union organizers, wrote the T. & G.W.U. *Record* in August 1921, have viewed the setting up of Trade Boards with mixed feelings:

> 'it is particularly discouraging, after giving time and effort to get the highest possible rates fixed by the Board, to be met at the factory by the attitude that "now there is a Trade Board fixing our wages we do not need an organization" — an attitude which has been in many cases judiciously fostered by the employers.'

This point was emphasized by Ellen Wilkinson[4] six years later:

> 'What has been the effect of Trade Boards on industrial organization? . . . When Trade Boards were new, when there was all the vast amount of propaganda in the Press and on the platform, the workers did take some interest. That interest does not exist today . . . the tragedy is that, because a large mass of workers, especially of the poorer class, see in the Trade Union only something that fixes their hours or wages, when those are fixed, as they say, by Government, their interest in and their membership of the Trade Union lapses.

[1] In 1938, 1.4 million workers (of whom 70 per cent were women) were covered by Trade Boards – out of 2.7 million whose wages were statutorily determined. 31 out of the 51 Trade Boards then existing had been set up in 1919 and 1920. The 1945 Wages Councils Act extended the scope of the Trade Boards Acts.

[2] SELLS (*British Wages Boards* (1939), p. 311) instances several employers' organizations for the setting up of which Trade Boards can be held responsible. The 1894 Act establishing State intervention in wage-fixing (New Zealand) was called an 'Act to encourage the formation of industrial unions and associations', but these words were dropped from the amending Act of 1898, and no such intention was expressed in the terms of the Trade Boards Acts of Great Britain. However, the fact that Trade Boards were set up only in industries where there was no adequate organization has suggested this intention.

[3] *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), pp. 291-2.

[4] In *Towards Industrial Peace* (1927), pp. 42-3. It is fair to state, however, that in 1931 a sub-committee of the T.U.C. Trade Boards Advisory Council did not recommend, after inquiry, the abolition of any existing Trade Board on such grounds, and that Union opposition declined thereafter. A favourable recent verdict was given by the Assistant General Secretary of U.S.D.A.W. (see *New Dawn*, October 1st, 1949).

> 'The Union of which I am an official and other Unions who are also interested in that Trade and are represented on the Board, had a very large membership in the laundries previous to the setting-up of the Board. I should say that outside the co-operative laundries the Trade Union organization among laundry workers is almost nil in comparison with the large body of workers in that trade. I cannot speak from equal experience of the clothing trade, but I believe it is true that in most of the Trade Board trades the number of people organized is today very much less that it was when the Trade Board first started.
>
> '. . . The immediate effect in such trades as the chain-making and shirt-making trades was to increase organization because the interest was maintained, but as soon as the Trade Board got into working order the opposite tendency took place.'

Moreover, since third parties — 'appointed persons' who are usually economists, lawyers, social workers, or sometimes ex-Civil servants — play an extremely important role in all trilateral forms of negotiation, this fact may have contributed to apathy on the workers' side.

The State as employer

'Once more the lesson has been forced home', wrote a historian of the postal workers' Union about the postmen's strike of 1890, 'that it was moral suicide for any single section of State servants to attempt to fight a Government with inexhaustible resources with the weapon of a strike, and without the assistance of an enlightened public sympathy on their side.'[1] Two American authors have recently pointed out that, since in the U.S.A. those Unions which cater for Government employees eschew strike action (often explicitly), the ultimate sanctions are being replaced by others of a very different character:

> 'instead of exerting the economic pressure of the lockout, public management draws on the real or implied powers of the State to oppose or curtail collective bargaining, or to keep it within bounds once accepted. Instead of the economic pressures of the strike, the unions exert political, publicity and psychological pressures.'[2]

In Britain, the Unions can certainly exercise political pressure; but they have shown themselves surprisingly backward, almost to the point of secretiveness, in the arts of publicity. Moreover, 'psychological pressures' (such as trying to shame the Government into setting an example to private employers?) are notoriously slow to take effect. Whether the new sanctions of Trade Unionism will prove as effective as the older and cruder weapons depends ultimately on the political powers available to the workers, i.e. on the social character of the State itself.

The problem has of course become acute since the end of the second world war, because a Labour Government has brought some of the biggest industries under public ownership. Whereas in the Civil Service proper, Trade Union

[1] SWIFT, *The History of Postal Agitation* (1929), p. 213.

[2] WILLIAMSON and HARRIS, *Trends in Collective Bargaining* (New York, 1945), p. 148; and see ch. XII, *passim*.

organization developed late, in some of the nationalized industries the State has come face to face with long-established Unions with a highly militant record. The Union leadership has often reacted quickly: 'Union leaders are in the unenviable position, after years of "boss-bashing", in which the miner was always right, of having to prove to their members that the boss can be, and now almost always is, right.'[1] Yet, as P.E.P.[2] put it, there is so far no particular reason why strikes in nationalized industries should be any less frequent or any different from strikes elsewhere — if only because (possible ideological satisfactions apart) the necessary reorganization is bound to produce new causes of friction. Witness the volume of mining strikes on the application of the 5-day week agreement.

In the U.S.S.R., of course, the need for avoiding strikes was put squarely on an ideological basis from the start: 'the strike, from being a weapon of attack against the capitalists, had become a form of blacklegging against the workers.'[3] Russian workers have the theoretical right to strike, and there have been isolated cases of small strikes even in state factories.[4] But 'the number of strikes has approached zero. With the almost complete elimination of former bourgeoisie from posts as managers of factories, the Party considers it absolutely unallowable that a situation should arise which would justify a strike. Consequently it would be almost impossible for a strike to occur which would have the support of the responsible leaders of the Unions'; the more impossible, if those concerned are held guilty of counter-revolutionary activities.

In Britain, while there has been a general ideological disapproval of strikes in nationalized industries, the emphasis has been different. There has of course been no suggestion of 'eliminating the former bourgeoisie' from managerial positions; the Trade Union leadership has progressively discarded Syndicalist aspirations,[5] although these may still survive among some of the rank and file who are correspondingly disappointed to find them unrealized, and have still to be convinced, as Lord Citrine said to the 1947 Yorkshire Miners' Rally, that they are not being asked to 'collaborate to make capitalism prosperous'.[6] It may be, wrote Mr. Herbert Morrison in 1933,[7] 'at some time in the future when socialism has far advanced, that the rights of labour will be so well represented that the workers themselves will feel confident of a fair deal and the direct weapon of the strike may go out of use'. Similarly, the Assistant General Secretary of the T.U.C. suggested in a broadcast in 1947[8] that for workers in nationalized industries, when the consultative machinery was perfected, the question of strike action would become 'almost entirely theoretical'.

[1] Yorkshire miner's opinion, quoted in *Daily Express* (September 17th, 1947).
[2] *British Trade Unionism* (1948), p. 159, and in general pp. 117-19.
[3] *Labour Research* (September 1st, 1920).
[4] Hoover, *Economic Life of Soviet Russia* (1931), pp. 267-8.
[5] Syndicalist objectives are still proclaimed in the rules of seven or eight Unions (see Barou, *British Trade Unions*, 1948, p. 132). Moreover, as recently as 1949 the N.U.R. demanded a 50 per cent share in the management of British railways.
[6] That such conviction is possible has been attested by the Kentish miners, who – in the words of the Chislet branch of the Kent Mineworkers' Association – 'not wishing to take advantage of or exploit the situation because of the economic position of the country', decided to fight a dispute, after giving 21 days' notice, by the novel weapon of increasing their output instead of stopping it. (*News Chronicle* (October 28th, 1947).) Marxists will no doubt perceive a classic instance of the Negation of the Negation.
[7] *Socialism and Transport* (1933), p. 238. [8] See *Labour* (March-April 1947), p. 211.

The National Coal Board, in the critical conditions of 1947, stood on its rights and prosecuted unofficial strikers for breach of contract; and the attitude of the N.U.M. regarding strikes has generally been one of unanimity with the employing body. Although this is fully understandable, it contributes little to convincing the workers; and unless they are convinced, the question of strike action can never become 'theoretical'. 'The men are bound together as a battering ram against the structure of the National Coal Board', ran a report of the Grimethorpe strike of 1947:[1] 'at the same time they are prepared to fight their union; some have even torn up their union cards.'

Obviously the functions of Trade Unions are in the melting-pot, and there is a danger that in the process of their transformation they may lose their members' confidence, or at least the passionate loyalty that brought them into being — and thus, incidentally, play into the hands of 'disruptive elements'. When Mr. Woodcock insisted in his broadcast that 'we do not propose to become the British equivalent of the German labour front, and we do not intend trade union representatives to become so closely identified with representatives of management that the workman is unable to tell one from the other', he was not merely setting up a skittle in order to knock it down. 'Two bus conductors', wrote the authors of an article in *Pilot Papers* which has been mentioned earlier,[2] 'who, during questioning about the closed shop said "Well, the Union is the Government", and then "You might as well say the Transport and General Workers' Union is our employer", were nearer to expressing the truth of the younger men's attitude than may, at first, seem likely.'

The Government and the Unions

It is by now a commonplace that the Trade Union leadership has achieved a new 'sense of responsibility' (described by its critics as conservatism). Such an attitude must have been enhanced by the contacts of Trade Union Leaders with the Government which have been so strongly developed during the two world wars — contacts which have been consolidated during the recent postwar period and are likely to be maintained. 'The national official or member of the national executive is in constant touch with the T.U.C., the Ministry of Labour, and perhaps the Government itself.[3] He becomes impressed with the Government's point of view and feels himself responsible, as it were, for the good behaviour of his union; the militancy and drive which made a name for him in his days as a branch or district committee member gives way as he grows older in his job to increasing caution.' The P.E.P. Report which makes this comment points out that since the end of the war several disputes have occurred in which, had the same grounds for complaint existed in pre-war days, the strikes would certainly have received official backing; and, moreover, that T.U.C. support of Government policy is sometimes baldly conveyed and inadequately defended.

This 'sense of responsibility' will no doubt be felt to some extent towards any Government irrespective of its political colour, but as is natural, very much

[1] *News Chronicle* (September 4th), 1947.
[2] *Pilot Papers*, vol. II, No. 3, p. 54.
[3] P.E.P. Report on *British Trade Unionism* (1948), p. 170; also pp. 113-19; and Appendix II, p. 182, where 105 bodies are listed – of which 55 are official or semi-official organizations – on which the T.U.C. is represented.

more intensely towards a Labour Government. T.U.C. support will usually express itself — particularly if the Government's majority is an absolute one[1] — in an attempt to restrain strikes so as to avoid embarrassing the Government and thus endangering the prospect of wholesale political and social gains; significantly, a speaker at the 1948 Trades Union Congress insisted that the maintenance of industrial peace was essential if the Labour Party was to win the next election.[2] After the end of the second world war a number of Unions appealed directly to their members to support the Government. The A.E.U. took the lead:[3]

> 'It is necessary to take a broad view and see the problems of reconstruction as a whole . . . We are now in a position where every shop steward and branch officer has to be something of a statesman. It will be necessary for them to study and understand high policy and learn to see how their particular shop, factory, or locality dovetails into the programme. Henceforward, it will be essential for the great issues of State — the means to full employment, balancing imports and exports, social security, and so on — to be discussed and understood in the branches.'

More negatively, this implied that Trade Unionists had to learn to put the strike weapon into cold storage, for the present at least. 'The trade unions had found and were using better methods of settling industrial disputes than the use of the strike', said Sir William Lawther in his presidential address to the 1949 T.U.C.; they 'stood today at a turning point where two paths diverged' — the new path being that of 'guiding the developments by which capitalistic enterprises were being transformed into public services'. Ill-conceived strikes could wreck everything: 'this transformation could be halted or reversed if trade unionists took the wrong path.'[4] At all times, of course, the effectiveness of the strike weapon must be judged in relation to its context, and it cannot be denied that the postwar context is very different from that of the interwar years. Now, it is argued, sectional wage rises take place not at the expense of profits so much as at the expense of the workers as a whole; and it is futile for Trade Unions to beggar their neighbours and ultimately themselves in this way. In postwar conditions and with a Labour Government in power, it was contended, the 'ruling class' could be 'squeezed' by more flexible and effective means than by strikes, through direct pressure on fiscal policy.

Certainly the Keynesian revolution in political-economic thinking has left a mark on Trade Union policy-making, at any rate at top level. But the contrast with the traditional Trade Union approach is very strong; even among those who are agreed on the preferability of improved social services and extensive

[1] If the Government majority is not absolute, it might on occasion seem tactically advisable to countenance a certain amount of strike activity so as to demonstrate the strength of Labour sentiment. There was a recrudescence of striking during the term of the second Labour Government between 1929 and 1931: the scale of strikes, measured by the average number of workers per dispute, touched by far the highest level between 1926 and the present day. This, of course, may be otherwise explained; but, albeit in very different circumstances, French workers of the *Front Populaire* period after 1936 'supported' their Government by big strikes to secure respect for the Government's legislation on the 40-hour week.

[2] Mr. T. Eccles (N.U.G. & M.W.); T.U.C. *Report* (1948), p. 338.

[3] See *The Times* (August 4th, 1945).

[4] Reported in *The Times* (September 6th, 1949).

food subsidies to sectional wage increases there persists the fear, born of experience, that social services and food subsidies may be cut and may not necessarily be more secure than wages. If the new attitude is to be wholeheartedly accepted, a high degree of political loyalty is required from the lower levels of the movement.

This raises the question of the movement's political cohesiveness. The stake of the Trade Unions in the Labour Party (or, to use more conventional terms, the link between the industrial and political wings of the labour movement) is very strong. It can be measured, in part, by the proportion of Trade Union members on the Party's executive, or again by the proportion of Labour M.P.s directly financed by the Unions. These, however, are 'top-level' measurements; at bottom level one may take as a measure, albeit an inadequate one, the proportion of Trade Union members who subscribe to their unions' political funds.[1] This figure meant more, of course, before the repeal in 1946 of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act, when the political attachments of Trade Unionists were less automatic.

Political Funds of Trade Unions

At end of year:	*Registered Unions:*			*Unregistered Unions:**
	(*a*) *Number of members contributing to Political Fund*	(*b*) *Total Number of members of Unions collecting Political Fund contributions:*	(*c*) (*a*) *as percentage of* (*b*):	*Number of members contributing to Political Fund:*
1928	1,634,019	2,801,434	58·3	581,444
1929	1,668,796	2,822,537	59·1	583,530
1930	1,683,457	2,840,000	59·2	590,044
1931	1,587,452	2,701,000	58·7	582,310
1932	1,493,495	2,553,283	58·5	542,404
1933	1,481,402	2,597,455	57·0	548,585
1934	1,575,865	2,731,846	57·7	525,443
1935	1,671,060	2,965,442	56·3	525,343
1936	1,779,537	3,297,797	54·0	544,980
1937	1,921,623	3,729,011	51·5	569,528
1938	1,974,903	3,935,080	50·2	574,724
1939	2,016,674	4,047,939	49·8	562,221
1940	not available			535,350
1941	not available			515,911
1942	not available			515,680
1943	2,385,417	5,705,835	41·8	515,502
1944	2,426,499	5,619,728	43·2	523,314
1945†	2,846,150	5,928,674	48·0	95,813

Source: *Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.* Comparable figures are not available for the years before 1928; nor for the transitional year 1946 when the 1927 Trade Disputes Act was repealed.

* No figures are available of the total membership of unregistered Unions.

† Differences in the figures for 1945 are largely due to the registration of the National Union of Mineworkers in that year.

[1] This is a somewhat more inclusive figure than that of Trade Unionists 'contracting-in' to the Labour Party. (Figures of the Trade Union affiliated membership of the Labour Party are given in the statistical appendix, p. 321.)

While at the end of 1925 there had been only 110,652 Trade Unionists (in the Unions which collected political contributions) who had specifically refused to subscribe, it will be seen above that by 1928 there were well over 1 million members, in registered Unions alone, who were failing to do so, after the 1927 Act compelled them to act individually. The gap between these figures is, in part, a reflection of political apathy.[1] For several reasons, such as the development of Trade Unionism among black-coated workers and especially the growth of the general labour Unions,[2] the proportion of Trade Unionists paying political contributions was steadily declining, even though their absolute numbers increased, between 1930 and 1939. (The later figures are distorted by the effect of war conditions.)[3]

As has been stressed, however, the links between top-level Trade Unionists and Government have recently been greatly strengthened. During the war some of the ablest Trade Union officials were seconded to the Government, and indeed the career of a Trade Union official can, more than ever, be a step in a larger *cursus honorum*.[4] Yet the question of the political 'colour' of the Government in power is still a matter of vital importance; for while a closer tie with Government would be wholly in line with the political affiliations and social aspirations of the Trade Unions if Labour were in power, they might find themselves in a very much weaker position *vis-à-vis* a less sympathetic Government. As things are, a live political democracy, a voice on the Boards which control nationalized industries, and a somewhat attenuated right to strike are the chief safeguards of the workers in any conditions which they find intolerable.

[1] The marked discrepancy between the hundred-thousand-odd 'contracting-out' before 1926 and the hundreds of thousands who had voted against contributing to a political fund at all when the issue was put to a vote in their Unions naturally attracted attention from Conservatives at the time of the drafting of the 1927 Act. (See *The Times* (January 21st and 22nd, 1927).)

[2] The failure of Labour Party support to keep pace with rising Trade Union membership is particularly marked in the general labour Unions. In 1937, 71 per cent of the T.U.C.-affiliated membership of the N.U.G. & M.W. was affiliated to the Labour Party; by 1946 this had fallen to 30 per cent, the corresponding figures for the T. & G.W.U. being 57 per cent and 37 per cent.

[3] In 1947, however, after the repeal of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act, the proportion of the members of registered Unions having political funds who paid political contributions jumped to nearly 91 per cent. (Figure from Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.)

[4] There may be some danger, though this is another question, of a real deterioration in the quality of Trade Union leadership, if potential leaders are 'lost' by going into Parliament, or, after winning University scholarships, into other careers altogether.

CHAPTER III

CONTROL OF STRIKES

UP to this point we have examined those developments which have affected strikes indirectly, and which have, on balance, tended to reduce their severity. We must next consider the effect of measures more or less deliberately aimed at controlling or suppressing strikes. These may be divided into (1) legal restrictions of various kinds, which are usually precautionary or punitive-deterrent in character, and (2) those other provisions which are designed not so much to prevent strikes as to break them or to minimize their effects. Legal restrictions are of many different kinds, but they can be distinguished into general restrictions, restrictions covering particular workers, and restrictions to meet particular circumstances. These will be considered not so much in the light of principles as in the light of their actual setting and effect.

Section 1: Legal restrictions in practice

'The steps I shall propose to take will be to have the men apprehended who have left their employ and to have them sent to the treadmill.'

Proposal of a magistrate to the Home Office for dealing with strikers during the depression of 1830 (cit., Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, 1760-1832 (1932), p. 65).

The contract of employment

The most general of the legal restrictions on striking is contained in the contract of employment itself. Nowadays the contract period is usually one week, although this is not universal: daily or even hourly contracts have been worked to in casual or intermittent trades; some miners have worked to a fortnightly contract, and 'staff' or salaried workers often have, of course, longer contracts.

Lightning strikes, without due notice, make workers — as distinct from their Unions — technically liable to civil actions for damages. Lawyers have objected to the anomaly of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act, which, in reversing the Taff Vale judgment, laid it down that 'an act done by a person in contemplation of furtherance of a trade dispute is not actionable only on the ground that it induces some other person to break a contract of employment'; and it has been suggested that one of the reasons for the acceptance of this provision was that workers would otherwise have pressed for day-to-day contracts. It is true that before the first world war Syndicalist and Industrial Unionist strike tacticians were objecting to the time element in the contract of employment because of the value they set on the military virtue of surprise; one of them insisted that strikers should give notice of a strike 'sufficient only to give the employer time to acceed' (*sic*) 'to their request'.[1] Charles Booth[2] wrote of the

[1] ELSBURY, *Industrial Unionism – its Principles and Meaning* (1911).
[2] *Industrial Unrest and Trade Union Policy* (1913), pp. 11-12.

'exaggerated value' that was being set on suddenness of attack, and on the slogan 'engagement by the minute', but pointed out that employers tended to approve of the slogan since they 'found in it, on their side, a tremendous engine of discipline'.

Actions against strikers for breach of contract are sometimes brought, although more often they are judged inexpedient; the very issue of the summonses may produce a further strike. When strikes are settled, however, one of the terms of settlement often is that claims for damages shall not be pressed; and after the 1926 General Strike the mere threat of action induced some unions (such as the N.U.R. and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation) to pay considerable sums to the employers so that legal action should not be taken against individual members.

Although Trade Unions normally give notice of a strike long enough in advance to comply with their members' contracts, this notice has strictly speaking no legal force because a Trade Union is not a party to its members' contracts and is not liable at law. Thus it is only by a convention that, where Trade Unions are recognized, collective notice is accepted by employers. For example, when a strike was threatened by Edinburgh Corporation workers in December 1924, a letter was sent by the Edinburgh Town Clerk to all workers likely to be involved, giving transcripts of Section 4 of the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and of Section 31 of the 1919 Electricity (Supply) Act, and ending with the comment: 'a notice in general terms given by the Secretary of a Union is not a notice to terminate the service of particular employees, and will not protect employees from statutory penalties.'[1] Similarly, in the Harworth miners' strike of 1937, the employers refused to accept collective notice and insisted on individual notice being given by every miner.

Restraints on workers in particular industries and services

Special restraints are imposed on workers in those industries and services where the effects of a stoppage are most widely and sharply felt (and where, in consequence, a lockout is virtually impossible). Workers in public utilities and the merchant navy, for example, may be convicted of a criminal offence, and fined or imprisoned, if they break their contracts by striking; other workers, for example shipbuilders working on Government contracts, have also been subjected to certain restrictions; and the 'right to strike' of civil servants, police and armed forces is also severely limited or not admitted at all. There have not been lacking proposals to extend the scope of legal restriction to all 'essential industries', particularly mining and transport.

Strikes have nevertheless taken place in most of these closed sectors. Obviously the mere existence of a restriction on the Statute Book is no guarantee that it will prove expedient to invoke it; if a strike movement is widespread, the enforcement of the law on the principle *jus est quod jussum est* would be economically catastrophic, even were it politically possible. The wider the net is cast the more difficult it is to draw it tight.

Workers in gas and water undertakings were covered by Section 4 of the 1875

[1] Quoted in *Workers' Weekly* (December 26th, 1924). The Acts in question are discussed below.

... 8 SEP 1954

Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act; workers in electricity undertakings by the 1919 Electricity Supply Act; and workers employed by local or other public authorities (e.g. in the health services) by the 1927 Trade Disputes Act during the period of its operation.[1] Such workers were forbidden, not to strike, but to break their contracts by striking; and in the early days the gas companies engaged their men on long contracts which expired at different dates — which is alleged to have 'practically prevented any strike except by men who were prepared to go to prison'.[2]

Merchant seamen were similarly restrained by the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act, which imposed imprisonment and loss of pay for refusing to go to sea after having been formally engaged, and for 'combining with any of the crew to disobey lawful commands' while at sea. Picketing was also an offence; fines of £10 per seaman 'tampered with', and £20 for giving shelter to such a seaman, were prescribed.[3]

Considerable strikes of seamen took place before the first world war, when seamen were trying to establish unity of action between their half-dozen-or-so Unions to meet the well-organized Shipping Federation and the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool. The seamen's Unions were members of the Transport Workers' Federation, and the great transport strike of 1911 won them many of their immediate demands, although the outstanding issues resulted in further strikes in 1912. The main points in dispute at this time were wages, Trade Union recognition, and the control of labour supply; Shipping Federation and Unions alike were trying to establish a monopoly of labour supply by issuing 'tickets' to workers, each party attempting to insist on possession of its ticket as alone conferring the right to work.[4] There has also been a struggle for up-to-date safety measures since the days of Plimsoll.[5]

Civil employees of the Crown are not specifically forbidden to strike. Since, however, the Crown is not bound by the ordinary laws of contract, they may, if they strike, be deprived of pensions and privileges which the terms of their employment have secured to them. This state of affairs, quite apart from the

[1] Under the 1875 Act, moreover, *any* person who 'wilfully and maliciously' breaks his contract of employment, 'knowing or having reasonable cause to believe' that his action will endanger life or valuable property, is liable to penalties.

[2] *Labour Research Department 'White Paper' No.* 15 (*The Right to Strike*), p. 6.

[3] At the end of 1919 a local secretary of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union persuaded certain men not to join a ship on which a dispute was in progress and promised to find them another ship. The Liverpool Stipendiary, deciding that such picketing was illegal under the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act, fined the secretary. There was also the famous case in 1926 where the President of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (Havelock Wilson) sued Branch officials of his Union for having called men out in response to the call for a General Strike. The judge (Mr. Justice Astbury) granted an injunction.

[4] The Shipping Federation underestimated the seamen's strength in 1911, maintaining that there were 'only 200 sailors and firemen who would respond to the strike'. When the dockers and carters were called out in sympathy, some 120,000 were affected. The seamen's strike was international in scope. (See the accounts given in ASKWITH, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 220f; and in the Labour Research Department's booklet on *Shipping* (1923), pp. 50-1.) On the question of the Federation and Union 'tickets', see FAYLE, *The War and the Shipping Industry* (1927), p. 266, where an account is given of the resolution of the deadlock in 1917 by Havelock Wilson's proposal of a jointly controlled source of labour supply under the National Maritime Board.

[5] For example, the Merchant Shipping (Wireless Telegraphy) Act was passed as late as 1919. Thereafter there were many cases of wireless operators – although they were employed independently by telegraph companies – being used to work with reduced crews: the wireless operators' strike of 1922 took place on this issue.

force of tradition and what Mr. W. J. Brown[1] has called the 'social embrace', is enough to make the strike weapon practically unusable. The 1927 Trade Disputes Act, while it segregated for nearly twenty years the Civil Service Trade Unions — involving some 300 to 350 thousand workers — from contact with the Trade Union movement as a whole, did not need to impose any formal restriction on the right of civil servants to strike, so that its repeal in 1946 has not made it any more legal for them to do so.[2]

The Union of Post Office Workers, although it has been perhaps the most militant of the civil service unions, and made independent application for reaffiliation to the T.U.C. while the 1927 Trade Disputes Act was still in force, had a 'no-strike convention' even before that date. It had originally decided to build up a strike fund, but afterwards reversed its decision and repaid the money. Its attitude during the 1926 General Strike has been described as one of diplomatic correctness, but although it had power to call a strike, its chairman was able to say at the Union's Conference in June 1926 that the Executive had been called on to pledge its general support to the movement and to put the resources of the Union at the disposal of the General Council. In the circumstances the Union 'did what the membership of the Union would expect them to do. We, as a Union, have definitely ranged ourselves upon the side of the working-class movement, and have reason to be proud of our share in the struggle'. (Some civil service bodies contributed to funds for miners' wives and children, but took no active part.)

Civil servants have however threatened to strike, and have even struck. There was, for example, the threat of a stay-in strike in the 'Departmental Classes' case in 1936; there was a mass protest, with demonstrations and a deputation, by civil servants who objected to their continued 'exile' at Llandudno in 1945;[3] a strike resolution was passed at the C.S.C.A. Conference in 1947; and there have been one or two small one-day strikes recently.

The case of the police is also a special one. Several efforts were made before the first world war to form a Trade Union for the police, and eventually the Police and Prison Officers' Union was established. It was not recognized.[4] By the end of the first world war conditions of pay had become very bad; and a strike broke out on August 30th, 1918, for an increased war bonus, for the reinstatement of a provincial organizer of the Union (also a delegate to the London Trades Council) who had been dismissed, as well as for Union recognition.

The Times (August 31st) opined that a body of men who had a 'large and intimate knowledge of the realities of life' were 'far too sober-minded to be the

[1] In *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), p. 489. It should be noted that *employees of local authorities* are not liable to lose their pensions, etc., except where there has been 'grave misconduct', which has to be proved against them; they are protected in this respect by the 1922 Superannuation Act.

[2] Cf. Sir Hartley Shawcross, Attorney-General, in *Commons* (February 12th, 1946).

[3] See *The Times* (August 30th, 1945). The protest was coupled with a threat of 'sabotage'; failing satisfaction, those concerned were to 'consider refusing to co-operate in preserving the outworn billeting system'.

[4] A body known as the Police and Citizens' Friendly Association had been promoted by the owner-editor of the *Police Review*. Later, a police 'league' was formed, which became first the Metropolitan Police Union and, eventually, the National Union of Police and Prison Officers which is referred to here. It was affiliated to the T.U.C.

dupes of any wild theory' and had 'very strong reasons for such unprecedented[1] conduct; although in the following year, when the war was safely over, it was maintaining in a special article that the sympathy allegedly felt by the public for 'our lads' was 'pity — not sympathy — pity a woman feels when she sees her lover lose his self-control for the first time. Excuses were made and justifications put forward because we loved the men — not because we thought they were right'. (The date of this extract was April the first.)

The 1918 strike was ended in three or four days by the (Metropolitan) police obtaining a wage increase of 13s. per week, widows' pensions, a virtual promise of reinstatement, and a limited toleration of the Union, 'so long as the Union did not claim or attempt to interfere with the discipline of the Service or to induce members of the Force to withhold their services'.[2] The Government subsequently denied having committed itself to recognition in any way; but the Union's President insisted that Mr. Lloyd George had made remarks 'to the effect that there was no objection to the Police and Prison Officers having their own union, and that, while he could not recognize the union during the war, the machinery of the union would simplify the setting up of committees inside the service'.[3] Mr. Lloyd George was also said to have undertaken to stop victimization (policemen having allegedly been conscribed and sent to the front for attending Union meetings).

The President, however, seems to have fatally weakened his case — although he insisted that he did this as a wartime concession only — by agreeing to the establishment of a non-Union organization for the police. At any rate, with the approval of the Home Secretary, a Metropolitan Police Representative Board was set up, to represent the members of the Force in matters connected with its conditions of service and general welfare (apart from questions of discipline), and to be elected by ballot among all officers and men below the rank of chief inspector. It was also recommended that similar bodies should be set up in the provinces.

The solidarity of the London police, and possibly the fact that sympathetic action — of the police in Manchester and other northern towns, and of organized Labour in London — was alleged to be forthcoming, may have influenced the Government to make speedy concessions; the more sinister suggestion has been put forward that the Government's decision was due to its being informed that sympathetic mutinies were in preparation at certain southern naval bases — and that the Admiralty also 'in alarm made immediate concessions to the sailors'.[4]

[1] The Metropolitan Police had, in fact, struck in 1872 (See ENSOR, *England* 1870-1914 (1936), p. 133).

[2] A strong element of ambiguity on this central question of recognition appears in the official report of the 1925 inquiry into the consequences of the strike (see *Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Claims of the Men Dismissed from the Police and Prison Services on Account of the Strike of* 1919 (*Cmd.* 2297), pp. 10-11).

[3] T.U.C. *Report* (1919), p. 153 (see also pp. 232-44).

[4] Fox, *The Class Struggle in Britain* (1933), part II, p. 41. According to Mr. George Lambert, M.P. (*Commons*, March 12th, 1919), 'at the end of last year there was grave unrest in the Navy, and preparations were being made for a very striking act of insubordination this year . . . because of accumulated grievances about pay and other things'. The connexion between this and the 1918 police strike, however, remains obscure; although the 1925 *Report* quoted above does not hesitate to ascribe the non-dismissal of the police strikers, and the concessions made to them, partly to considerations of expediency: 'the Authorities apparently took the view that it was essential to get the police services going again, the country being at a critical point in the European war.'

It was not long before the executive positions of the new Metropolitan Police Representative Board were captured by the officers of the Union (which continued in existence, and indeed claimed a 90 per cent membership in London); and the Board appears to have spent a great deal of time passing resolutions. As a result of the 'defiant' wording of one of these, the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner refused to have further dealings with the Board's Executive Committee; and early in March a deadlock was reached — not only the Commissioner, but also the Home Secretary, refusing to receive a deputation as provided for by the rules of the Board. The Government, which had appointed the Desborough Committee at the beginning of the month to inquire into pay and conditions (but not into Union recognition), now produced a new scheme, involving three separate Boards, which was promptly boycotted by the Union.

The issues had thus been complicated in the interval; and by the end of May 1919 a ballot was taken for a further strike for Union recognition. Of 55,183 ballot papers issued, 44,599 were returned in favour of a strike, only 4324 votes being given against. The strike, however, was postponed — allegedly for the tactical reason that a Guards regiment had been brought to London, and arrangements had been made for tank and machine-gun posts to be established: 'we shall come out on strike when it suits us, not when it suits them.'[1] (The postponement was also ascribed, however, to the fact that the Desborough Committee had just recommended wage increases, and the Government had sternly announced that strikers would be dismissed and forfeit their pension rights.) When the strike was formally called on July 31st (the new Police Bill having reached the Report stage), less than 2400 police were involved out of some 60,000 and only 75 prison officers out of 2000.[2] The response was thus so poor that, while increases of pay and pensions were granted, the strikers could be dismissed. Although the Government was said to have 'informally assisted' the dismissed strikers to gain employment, some 1800 of them, according to the T.U.C. Report, were still out of work in October.

The resulting Police Act of 1919 formally forbade the police to join a Trade Union (although Section 2 of the Act permitted members of the Force who had been Trade Unionists before joining it to maintain their Trade Union membership), and an elective organization was set up, no affiliation to outside bodies being permitted and no general conciliation and arbitration machinery being established. The position, in fact, of the police was made more analogous to that of the armed forces; but although participating in a strike was not explicitly

[1] *The Times* (June 2nd, 1919).

[2] The figures cited in the 1925 *Report* (*Cmd.* 2297) were as follows:

Force		*Strength:*	*Number of strikers:*
Metropolitan Police		18,200	1,056
City of London Police		970	58
Birmingham Police		1,320	119
Liverpool Police		1,874	955
Birkenhead Police		180	114
Bootle Police		77	63
Wallasey Police		120	1
Wormwood Scrubs	(prison officers)	2,000	68
Birmingham	(prison officers)		7

The figure of Metropolitan Police dismissals for 'misconduct' was given as 1,110 (*Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for* 1918 *and* 1919, *Cmd.* 901).

forbidden, it meant dismissal and forfeiture of pension rights (a serious consideration, since the retiring age is low); and anyone attempting to organize a strike or doing 'any act calculated to cause disaffection or . . . to induce any member of a police force to withhold his services or to commit breaches of discipline' is liable to two years' imprisonment or a £50 fine. As was pointed out at the time of the strikes, picketing of the police, if it amounted to 'forcible interference', could already be dealt with under the Crimes Act of 1885.

The sympathy of organized labour for the police in the earlier of the two strikes[1] was ascribed to the fear that a general attack on Trade Unionism was imminent. It was also symptomatic of the times that, after the passage of the Police Act, voices should have been raised to extend its application. The T.U.C. Report for the following year[2] quotes the National Union of Manufacturers as proposing (1) that the provisions of the 1919 Police Act should be extended 'to all nationalized public services, including telegraph, telephone, postal and excise services, together with the mines and railways, if and when nationalized'; (2) that in each case the servant should swear an oath of loyalty to the State; (3) that Trade Unions in these services should be prohibited; (4) that the advocacy of a strike in any 'national service' should be a penal offence; and (5) that tribunals should be created 'to deal with any complaints and to adjudicate upon any issue, and to co-relate from time to time the wages paid in the public services with those paid in the open market'.

As regards the armed forces themselves, while they have never had the right to form Trade Unions or to strike, there have in fact been 'mutinies' at various times in the past fifty years, and 'strikes' following the second world war. The distinction between a 'mutiny' and a 'strike' seems tenuous; it may simply be that a 'mutiny' which it is not practicable to suppress at once ranks as a 'strike'. In fact, the 'mutinies' which occurred at the end of the first world war were largely spontaneous, most of those taking part in them not being actuated by revolutionary motives but by material grievances like those of strikers in industry.[3]

Servants of the State are thus precluded, in one way or another, from taking strike action. In principle, indeed, there seems little reason why the 'vast army of clerks engaged in routine work of a more or less mechanical kind' — to use Professor Laski's phrase of the lower grades of the civil service — should suffer even a conventional restriction on the use of the strike in the last resort; since for them the Government is, as an employer, no different from what they would meet in the ordinary labour market.[4] But in practice the possible political repercussions of a strike of even the humblest of State servants are taken to justify the existing state of affairs. Moreover, it is conceivable that in this respect the condition of workers in nationalized industries may come to approximate to that of civil servants proper; even though in theory their right to strike may be unaffected, in practice they may be governed by a 'no-strike' convention.

[1] These police strikes are not mentioned in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*. One would like to see the official account of 'one of the most unique mass meetings of history', when Mr. Duncan Carmichael, later Secretary of the London Trades Council, 'led 20,000 rebel policemen into Downing Street', using the wall as a speaker's platform. (*Sunday Worker*, May 21st, 1925.)

[2] 1920, p. 213.

[3] For details of some of these, see WINTRINGHAM, *Mutiny* (1936), ch. ix.

[4] See LASKI, *Liberty in the Modern State* (1930), pp. 132-3 (Penguin edn.).

Underlying these restrictions on the striking of State servants is an estimate of the damage — damage to the prestige of the State as well as economic damage — which would be incurred if strikes happened. Police and armed forces are of course the extreme case. Thus the State is held to be entitled to (i) the loyalty of its servants and to (ii) continuity of service beyond what would be required for the mere avoidance of public inconvenience. It is not therefore enough to argue that so far as the strikers' intention goes it is not the State *qua* State, but the State *qua* bad employer, which is being struck against. There seems nevertheless some force in Laski's point that the history of most modern civil services shows the unwisdom of leaving the Government free to determine the substance of the contract of service: 'it is just as likely as any private employer to extract the most it can get for the least it needs to give; and it is no more fit than any other employer to be left uncontrolled in this field. The more labour conditions in government services are determined finally by an independent authority, the more reasonable they are likely to be.' It is true that for civil servants there are certain checks on Governmental authority, in so far as questions come up for arbitration before the Industrial Court or (since its establishment in 1936) the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal;[1] and it is true that serving members of the armed forces are now officially permitted to approach their M.P.s on matters concerning their 'terms of employment';[2] but there are still gaps to be filled.

Restraints to meet particular circumstances: the 'Triple Alliance' and the Emergency Powers Act

The 1920 Emergency Powers Act, which 'for the first time in peace made freeborn Englishmen liable at any Government's arbitrary discretion to all rigours of that ancient Junker-Tsarist device, the "state of siege"',[3] was brought into being as an answer to the threat of action by the Triple Alliance: 'on paper at least, the most formidable industrial organization in the world.'[4]

> 'If at any time [ran its text] it appears to His Majesty that any action has been taken or is immediately threatened . . . of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life, His Majesty may, by proclamation . . . declare that a state of emergency exists.'

[1] There is, however, no compulsion on the Government to go to arbitration when it wants to alter conditions of service; and indeed it may refuse arbitration on any issue 'on grounds of policy' – as it has done once, on the question of 'equal pay'. Suggestions have often been made that appeals from executive decisions, and requests for decisions on whether claims are arbitrable or not, should be able to be made to impartial persons or bodies; but hitherto without success. The official view is elaborated in the Treasury's *Staff Relations in the Civil Service* (H.M.S.O., 1949), ch. v.

[2] It is of course conceivable that opinion may change still further on this point, and that some form of protective association may be permitted even to the armed forces. As recently as 1892 a railway manager (Sir George Findlay), in evidence before a Royal Commission, said that he considered Trade Unionism 'totally incompatible' with the railway service: 'you might as well expect to have Trades Unionism in Her Majesty's Army.' (Summaries of evidence taken before the *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, Group B, vol. III, p. 288). But the argument might be reversed.

[3] HUTT, *Post-War History of the British Working Class* (1937), p. 32.

[4] COLE, *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry* (1923), p. 30.

A single proclamation could be in force for one month, without prejudice to the issue of another; and so long as a proclamation was in force,

> 'it shall be lawful for His Majesty in Council, by Order, to make regulations for securing the essentials of life to the community, and those regulations may confer or impose on a Secretary of State or other Government department, or any other persons in His Majesty's service or acting on His Majesty's behalf, such powers and duties as His Majesty may deem necessary for the preservation of peace, for securing and regulating the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, light, and other necessities, for maintaining the means of transit or locomotion, and for any other purposes essential to the public safety and the life of the community, and may make such provisions incidental to the powers aforesaid as may appear to His Majesty to be required for making the exercise of those powers effective.'

Furthermore,

> 'the regulations may provide for the trial, by courts of summary jurisdiction, of persons found guilty of offences against the regulations.'

— the maximum penalties being imprisonment with or without hard labour for three months, and/or a fine of £100. The Government may, moreover, assume powers of search and arrest without warrant.

Although these provisions were accompanied by a specific disclaimer of the intention to impose any form of military or industrial conscription, or indeed any infringement of the formal right to strike, they were remarkably wide, and established a firm base on which to organize the breaking of big strikes. Some digression is necessary to explain the context of the Act, with reference to the Triple Alliance.

The problem of securing united industrial action by workers all over the country has exercised the minds of Trade Unionists from earliest times, and failures have been many. One of the more recent efforts at creating a co-ordinating general staff — complete with a war Treasury — was the G.F.T.U., set up by the T.U.C. in 1899; but this, which resembled the abortive 'Federation of Organized Trade Societies' of 1874, 'soon degenerated into a mutual insurance organization, and its strength and importance have continued to dwindle ever since'.[1] The General Council of the T.U.C. had not yet been created for the same purpose, and grand strategy, such as it was, lay in the hands of the Triple Alliance — the Miners' Federation, the N.U.R. and the Transport Workers' Federation.

The origins of this alliance lie in the Syndicalist era of 1911-12. The lack of co-ordination in the massive strike movements of these years had cost the Unions dear. When the transport workers and railwaymen came out in the summer and autumn of 1911, many thousands of miners were thrown out of work because it was no longer possible to transport coal from the pitheads; and when the miners came out nationally in 1912, railwaymen and transport workers were similarly thrown out of work because there was no coal to transport over the railways and

[1] MILNE-BAILEY, *Trade Union Documents* (1929), p. 27 (introduction). Its organizational weaknesses are discussed by Halévy (*History of the English People*, 1895-1905 (1929), pp. 260-1).

to ship at the ports. In both strikes, tremendous sums had to be paid by the Unions in unemployment and other benefits (the N.U.R. for example spent nearly £100,000 as a result of the 1912 miners' strike). Thus it was obviously better, if a strike were called for, to strike together rather than separately; and the Miners' Federation, at its conference at Scarborough, passed a resolution calling upon their Executive Committee 'to approach the Executive Committees of other big Trade Unions with a view to co-operative action, and the support of each others' demands'. This naturally meant arranging that agreements in the three industries should terminate together, enabling fresh demands to be advanced simultaneously.[1] It was hoped, indeed, that so great a deployment of power would act as a 'procedure for avoiding disputes' by forcing employers to concede all reasonable demands. To some it appeared invincible.[2]

The Alliance came into full existence in December 1915, and for the remainder of the first world war took up, as a propagandist body, political rather than industrial issues. It campaigned, for example, in favour of an increase in old age pensions, against the Government plan to introduce foreign (especially Chinese) labour to remedy the wartime labour shortage, and in favour of Labour's post-war plans. The first threat of its operation as a striking force occurred in 1920 on the occasion of the 'datum line' miners' strike (October 16 to November 3) — in effect a strike against the Government as an employer, since the Government was still in control of the mines; and the Government countered by the introduction of the Emergency Powers Act.

But it was not until 1921, the year of the slump, when the temporary agreement reached at the end of the datum line strike expired, and the sudden decontrol of the mining industry (involving the end of national wage regulation and a return to district agreements, the annulment of uniform national increases, and the proposal of sweeping wage cuts) precipitated a big-scale dispute, that the Triple Alliance looked as if it would be fully implemented. It was anticipated on the first day of the dispute (March 21) by a Government proclamation under the Emergency Powers Act providing for the maintenance of transport and food supplies. The strike order was in fact issued to railway and transport workers' Unions on April 8, to take effect on April 12 midnight; this was altered to April 15 owing to negotiations, and on that day ('Black Friday') the strike order was rescinded and the miners went ahead alone. The 'Cripple Alliance', as it was gibingly called, had perished, apparently under the impact of *force majeure*. There had indeed been some preparation on the workers' side; other large Unions had decided to strike in support of the Alliance — the C.W.S. and N.U.D.A.W. had offered independent help in the supply and distribution of food; but the Government's prompt call-up of army, navy, and air force reservists, the moving of troops into mining areas and the instalment of machine-gun posts at pitheads, the establishment of supply depots in public parks, the

[1] It should be noted that, when the Triple Alliance was formed, the miners had not yet been able to achieve the simultaneous termination of their own district agreements.

[2] E.g. to Mr. G. R. CARTER, in *The Triple Alliance of Labour*, *Economic Journal* (September 1916). The same author developed the theme more fully in a booklet grandiosely entitled *The Significance and Possibilities, National and International, for Industry, Commerce, Finance, Politics and Trade Unionism of the Triple Alliance of Industrial Trade Unionism. Could It Be the Decisive Factor in World Peace and Democratic Reconstruction?* (1917).

enrolment of special constables and the preparation of a special defence force of some 80,000 armed and uniformed men, proved too much for the Alliance to face.

The Government insisted that the threat of Trade Union action was 'political', unconstitutional and revolutionary, and behaved accordingly, despite the protestation of the spokesmen of the Alliance that so far from proclaiming a revolution they were merely 'standing shoulder to shoulder for fundamental Trade Union rights'. Apart, however, from the Unions' refusal to take up the gauntlet of civil war, it was clear from the first, as Cole pointed out,[1] that so great an industrial machine would be very difficult to operate: 'the railwaymen urged the importance of rapid action because they realized that in such an industry as the railways a strike must be sudden, and sympathetic action by other sections must also be sudden if it is to be of use. In the mining industry rapidity of action matters far less; for the effects of a mining strike, while they may be as great in the long run as those of a railway strike, are far slower in making themselves felt.'

Furthermore on the organizational side the Alliance was weak, if only because of the loose structure of the Transport Workers' Federation and the limited powers which it was able to exercise over its constituent Unions. (At the threat of a strike, the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, under Havelock Wilson, tried to oppose the Federation's Strike resolution—after which it left the Federation in time to avoid being asked to do so.) What, no doubt, was needed was a federation on the lines of the N.F.B.T.O., which has power to call out members of its affiliated building Unions — the strike benefit being paid by the Unions but partly reimbursed by the Federation.

Cole however also emphasized, in a post-mortem on Black Friday held in the columns of *Labour Monthly* in the summer of 1921, the role of the 'advocates of defeat', who succeeded in postponing the strike again and again in the hope of being able to cancel the strike notices altogether; and their motives were revealed in a reply by Robert Williams: 'we knew that at any time a Triple Alliance contest against "all the resources of the State" would be an "even" chance, but that on a falling market, with some million and a half unemployed, the odds were against us. This was pointed out more than once, but we were peremptorily told to "get on t'field" by the President of the Miners' Federation.'

The originators of the Triple Alliance had no doubt been wise in their aim of concluding concurrent agreements; but the aim had not been realized. The N.U.R.[2] had secured a fairly satisfactory new agreement in 1919; the dockers had been given, by the Shaw Award, a certain wage advance with the prospect of further advancement; but the miners, who had abandoned their original strike of 1919 in favour of a Royal Commission and had failed to bring in the Triple Alliance in October 1920, were not only unsatisfied but also at a strategic disadvantage; the other sections of the Alliance were reluctant to endanger their gains in order to help them.

Proposals for a new Industrial Alliance,[3] put forward at the instance of the

[1] *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry* (1923), p. 34. See also p. 177.
[2] The Alliance did not include the A.S.L.E. & F., although this Union consented to join in the threatened strike of 1921.
[3] The Industrial Alliance was to render assistance, where required, under the following heads: (*a*) negotiation, (*b*) financial, (*c*) partial sympathetic action, (*d*) sympathetic action

engineers in 1924, proved abortive: while their Unions, with those of the iron and steel workers, transport workers, the A.S.L.E. & F. and the E.T.U. were prepared to accept the proposed rules, the N.U.R. declined to do so. Thus in 1925 and 1926 it was the T.U.C. General Council, formed in 1921, that took up the miners' case and threatened 'direct action';[1] but after the showdown the miners were once again left to fight their own battles.

Up to the time of writing, the Emergency Powers Act has been involved on five occasions: first, in 1921, in face of the threat of action by the Triple Alliance which has been described; next in 1924 — this time by a hard-pressed Labour Government, on the occasion of a tubemen's strike on the London transport system; once again during the General Strike and coal strike of 1926; and finally by the third Labour Government, during the dockers' strikes of 1948 and 1949. In 1921, 1926 and 1949, specific regulations were made under the Act.[2]

The General Strike and the Trade Disputes Act

While the 1920 Emergency Powers Act made no inroads on the right to strike, the 1927 Trade Disputes Act, which followed the calamitous General Strike of 1926, was designed — *inter alia* — formally to illegalize any sympathetic strike (of workers outside the industry where the dispute arose) which might be held to force the hand of the Government of the day, either directly or indirectly:

> 'It is hereby declared that a strike[3] is illegal if it —
>
> (i) has any object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged; and

[i.e. both these conditions had to be fulfilled before the strike could be declared illegal]

> (ii) is a strike designed or calculated to coerce the Government either directly or by inflicting hardship upon the community.'

While individuals who participated in such illegal strikes were not to be held guilty of an offence, Trade Unions which instigated or supported them were to lose the protection of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act.

The Act was called into being by the General Strike, and some account of its context is necessary. No fundamental questions had been settled by the display of force in 1921, and the main issue — the fate of the miners — was shelved until 1925 and, once again, until 1926.

[1] The General Strike was, in fact, actually called not by the T.U.C. General Council (which had no power to do so), but by a special conference of Trade Union Executives.

[2] For the 1921 regulations, see the summary account in the *Labour Gazette* of April 1921. The 1926 Regulations are given in Part II of GLASGOW, *General Strikes and Road Transport* (1926). In 1948 regulations were drafted, but not used owing to the ending of the strike; in 1949 a committee of 5 was appointed to control the situation.

[3] A corresponding definition of an illegal lockout also appeared in the Act, although this was omitted from the original draft.

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by stages, (*e*) complete sympathetic action. The form of assistance was to be determined by a General Conference, if the Executive Committee saw fit to call one after examining the circumstances; and the General Conference had power to override the constitutions or agreements of the member organizations. (The proposed constitution of the Industrial Alliance was printed in full in the T. & G.W.U. *Record* for August 1925.)

Mr. Churchill had said, in a speech made as Chancellor of the Exchequer on December 10th, 1925, that six months earlier, on July 31st ('Red Friday' to the extreme Left, 'Good Friday' to the *Daily Herald*, but 'Blackmail Friday' to the Conservative Press — the day on which the miners were given a further respite by the Samuel Commission), the Government had been impressed with the fact that

> 'the country as a whole was not sufficiently informed about the character and immense consequences of such a struggle as that with which it was confronted ... We therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, or, if not of averting it, of coping effectually with it when the time comes.'

The Government spent the interval profitably; when the time did come, it had some 200,000 commercial vehicles at its disposal, in view of a subsidy arrangement with private owners; coal stocks were said to be sufficient to supply the public utilities for five months; the 98,000 special constables had been increased to 226,000 (with another 18,000 in the newly-formed reserve); and the military, naval and police power of the State was mobilized, as well as hundreds of thousands of volunteers.[1]

Many of the Government's measures were taken months before the event; in a speech at Ipswich as early as the first week of February 1926, Joynson-Hicks was able to give a detailed picture of completed preparations. By contrast, the T.U.C., although they were clearly aware of what they would have to meet, drew up their plan (the draft was ascribed to Mr. Bevin) only a few days before the stoppage started. Indeed, the absence of specific arrangements with the Co-operative Movement, the confusion over the whole question of T.U.C. permits, and the character of the T.U.C.'s directives during the strike itself, reveal the extent of the improvisation.

The most frequently criticized feature of the plan was the calling-out of labour in successive 'waves': the key industries in the first line, engineering and shipyard workers in the second and so on.[2] Although one study of the strike[3] takes the line that this was an excellent scheme, despite the restiveness of those who had not been called out, since 'morale was all the time being strengthened, and those out always had the feeling that more and more were coming out', the tactic of maintaining reserves was effectively countered by the Government's tactic of maximum concentration of forces at one point. But the apparent hesitancy of the General Council's plan reflected its intention to limit the character of the strike to that of a peaceful demonstration of mass-disobedience — in

[1] See MILNE-BAILEY, *Trade Unions and the State* (1934), p. 73. The Civil Constabulary Reserve numbered 24,556 at the end of 1926. In the Metropolitan Area, the number of 'specials' rose from 12,000 to 60,000 during the strike. A special auxiliary force of 300 mounted police was also formed. (*Report of Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for* 1926, *Cmd.* 2882).

[2] 'There was some confusion in the Trade Union policy regarding electric supply, an attempt being made at first to discriminate between light and power, and later between different uses of power. The result was that in some localities the men came out, and in others did not: but everywhere the services were maintained, in London with the help of naval ratings' (D. H. ROBERTSON, *Narrative of the General Strike of* 1926, *Economic Journal* (September 1926), p. 386).

[3] HORRABIN, POSTGATE and WILKINSON, *A Worker's History of the Great Strike* (1927), p. 36.

Lansbury's phrase, a 'ten days' exhibition of comradeship and solidarity'. The control of the strike was kept in the hands of the General Council through a series of sub-committees, the functions of the Trades Councils being strictly curtailed.

Even so, it is by no means agreed that the strikers could not have won their objectives, and possibly much wider objectives, since the strike never weakened; picketing reached the stage in places of barricading and controlling the streets, police were resisted and even besieged in their stations, some town halls were occupied, and the beginnings of workers' own food services appeared, as well as a whole crop of local newspapers and bulletins. The organization of the strike improved, and Trades Councils and strike committees began to prepare a national conference to co-ordinate their efforts. But to have continued indefinitely would presumably have meant taking up the challenge of civil war with which the Government immediately, and constantly, faced them. The T.U.C. protested:

> 'The General Council does NOT challenge the Constitution. It is not seeking to substitute unconstitutional government. Nor is it desirous of undermining our Parliamentary institutions. The sole aim of the Council is to secure for the miners a decent standard of life. The Council is engaged in an Industrial dispute. In any settlement, the only issue to be decided will be an industrial issue, not political, not constitutional. There is no Constitutional crisis.'[1]

In consequence, provocation was to be strictly avoided:

> 'The General Council has been informed that a military cordon has been drawn round the London Docks area. The General Council urges all our people to keep out of this area and thus avoid any possibility of conflict with the military authorities.'

The Cardiff strike committee was even more specific:

> 'Keep smiling. Refuse to be provoked. Get into your garden. Look after the wife and kiddies. If you have not got a garden get into the country, the parks and playgrounds. Do not hang about the centre of the city. Get into the country; there is no more healthful occupation than walking.'[2]

Crook, in his detailed study of the strike,[3] suggested that the Government was dominated by a 'civil war psychosis' which developed in inverse proportion to the pacifism of the Trade Union officials. Yet the Trade Union attitude of

[1] Statement by the General Council; *British Worker* (May 9th, 1926). The situation in 1926 should be contrasted with that of 1919, where it was the Government that was on the defensive: 'The Government is NOT fighting Trade Unionism. Trade Unionism is a recognized factor of the industrial life of the country', etc. (Lloyd George's message, shown on the screen at all cinemas: see *The Times* (October 3rd, 1919).)

[2] *British Worker*, issue cited.

[3] *The General Strike* (1931), p. 422. One report asserts that the Government went so far as to inform the General Council that 'unless the strike was peaceably over in two days, the General Council and all local committees were to be arrested, the Army reserve would be called up and the military put in control, and a Bill forced through Parliament confiscating all union funds' (POSTGATE, *Inner History of the General Strike*, in the *Locomotive Engineers' Journal* for July 1926).

Christians-challenging-the-lion was possibly all that could have been expected, given the actual relation of physical forces. Because the General Council had no intention of risking civil war, the very stiffening of rank-and-file resistance — the very success of the strike — increased their nervousness: 'what I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this', said Mr. J. H. Thomas in the Commons on May 13th, 'if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did.' Similarly, Mr. Dukes of the N.U.G. & M.W. affirmed at the special conference of Trade Union Executives the following January[1] that 'every day that the strike proceeded, the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, and was wrecking the movement from one end to the other'. Ironically enough, it seems also to have been the fear of anarchy which, to some extent at least, had induced the Trade Union leadership to go into the strike at all: 'It must not be forgotten', wrote Mr. Bevin,[2] 'that, apart from the rights and wrongs of the calling of a General Strike, there would in any case, with the miners' lockout, have been widespread unofficial fighting in all parts of the country, which would have produced anarchy in the movement.'

Cole[3] maintains that the result was foregone in the sense that the General Council went into the strike believing defeat to be inevitable unless the Government would, in its mercy, agree to save their face; that the Government had no mind to do this since its leaders believed that they had 'successfully lured the Trade Unions to their destruction; and they had every intention of making the most of their chance'. As for the employers, the only thing which prevented them from consolidating their victory was the fact that the U.S.A. boom was approaching its peak, and that they were in a position to reap large profits since they were 'assured of docile labour if they left well alone'; rather than risk stoppages at this critical time, it was thought to be tactically better 'instead of stamping on the Trade Unions, to come to terms with them while they were in a humble and contrite mood — terms which would consolidate capitalist supremacy and, if possible, carry with them a permanent incorporation of Trade Unionism in the capitalist machine'.

Against this background, the elaborate arguments concerning the 'legality' of a General Strike sound strangely unrealistic today, although they may have had some of their intended effect at the time. Sir John Simon, as he then was, made two speeches in the Commons, on May 6th and May 11th (the latter date coinciding with that of the Astbury Judgment). On May 6th, he maintained that the breach of contract committed by most of the strikers in itself rendered the strike 'illegal', and that 'every Trade Union leader who has advised and promoted this course of action is liable to damages to the uttermost farthing of his possessions'. But on May 11th, he suggested that the General Strike was not a trade dispute at all, but 'a movement of a perfectly different and of a wholly unconstitutional and unlawful character'. This statement followed the lines of

[1] T.U.C. General Council, *Report of Proceedings* (January 20th-21st, 1927), p. 58.

[2] Quoted by A. J. Bennet, *The General Council and the General Strike* (1926), p. 18. (This work is one of several Communist post-mortems on the General Strike.)

[3] *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), pp. 74-5.

the Astbury Judgment, according to which not only was the (National Sailors' and Firemen's) Union branch acting in contravention of Union rules in calling out its men, but

> 'the so-called General Strike called by the Trades Union Congress is illegal and contrary to law, and those persons inciting or taking part in it are not protected by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. No trade dispute has been alleged or shown to exist in any of the Unions affected, except in the miners' case, and no trade dispute can or does exist between the Trades Union Congress on the one hand and the Government and the nation on the other.'

The import of this decision, remarked D. H. Robertson in the *Economic Journal* for September 1926, was apparently to deprive the strikers of the protection not only of the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, but of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875, and thus to permit the resuscitation of the almost extinct doctrines of 'conspiracy to injure' and 'interference with trade'. The pronouncement (which some have dismissed as an *obiter dictum*) came as a surprise to many lawyers, who, like ordinary people had assumed that Section 5 (3) of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, however badly worded, was intended to cover sympathetic action. The editor of the *Law Quarterly Review* argued at some length that there was no question of treason, seditious conspiracy or ordinary criminal conspiracy: 'what distinguishes a General Strike is that it is more likely to succeed'.[1]

How far the declarations of the strike's illegality gave pause to any save those predisposed to be convinced by them is an open question. Similarly, the language of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act which followed, formally illegalizing certain sympathetic strikes[2] which may be deemed to force the hand of the Government directly or indirectly, probably had much less deterrent effect than the experience itself. If it is as difficult, as Sir Hartley Shawcross said in 1946, to bring down a rocket bomb with a peashooter as to stop a strike by the processes of the criminal law, to stop a future general strike in this way 'would be like trying to stop a hurricane with a pair of bellows'.[3] Conversely, it may be agreed, the repeal of the Act in 1946 'would do nothing to make a general strike or any strike more possible or more probable, and . . . will certainly do nothing to weaken the respect for law and the maintenance of the rule of law in this country'.[4]

The final section of the 1927 Act, however, defined a strike as 'the cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any trade or industry acting in combination, or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are, *or have been*, so employed, to continue to work or to accept employment'. Although no case based on this clause arose between

[1] GOODHART, *The Legality of the General Strike in England* (reprinted from *Yale Law Journal* (February 1927).)

[2] Some lawyers have held that, conceivably, a 'primary' strike (as distinct from a sympathetic strike) in a single industry might have been illegal under the Act – if for example it had a political object in addition to that of promoting a trade dispute and was intended or calculated to coerce the Government. See H. STRAUSS, *Trade Unions and the Law* (1946), p. 45, for a citation of legal opinion on this point.

[3] MR. HARNEY, M.P., *Commons* (May 2nd, 1927).

[4] SIR HARTLEY SHAWCROSS, *Commons* (February 12th, 1946).

1927 and 1946, it is a startling widening of the term strike: 'never yet in the whole history of English law', wrote Sidney Webb, 'unless, indeed, such a provision can be supposed to have existed in the Middle Ages, has it been sought to make it a criminal offence for persons not actually in employment to refuse to accept employment on the employers' terms'. Crook, quoting this remark of Webb's with sympathy, describes the guerrilla resistance of the workers in refusing to return to work on the Carthaginian terms proposed by the employers; and it was this resistance which seems to have accounted for the inclusion of the clause.

It was of course High Court judges who had to decide whether or not a strike was illegal: who the 'community' was and how far they were suffering 'hardship'; whether the Government was in fact being embarrassed: and whether the strike in question had any object 'other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged'. The pronouncement of a strike as 'illegal' involved more than the mere affixing of a label; since, although merely taking part in such a strike was not an offence, declaring[1] the strike or instigating or inciting others to take part in it *was* an offence, irrespective of earlier statutes; no Union funds could be used to support it, nor could a Union penalize any member for not participating in it.

In point of fact, this section of the Act was applied only once, and in this instance the decision at the assizes was upset by the Court of Criminal Appeal on a point of law, 'with the result that the strikers were able to go away and laugh at the law'.[2]

Prohibition of strikes in wartime

It is safe to say that the general prohibition of strikes by law has never, of itself, had the effect intended. The impracticability of imposing penalties in serious cases has long been obvious, and the superiority of 'moral pressure' was stressed as early as 1896, when the Conciliation Act was passed. The experience of other countries has been more or less similar to that of Britain. For example, during the years of operation of the Wise Act in New South Wales, between 1901 and 1908, 186 strikes took place; but, although the leave to prosecute was often granted, there were only two prosecutions, and only one conviction followed by a fine: 'when it has become necessary to put the law into action it has broken down in a manner which can only be described as ludicrous . . . employers actually paid the fines of their own strikers to prevent the labour

[1] Penalties for any person declaring, instigating or inciting others to take part in such an illegal strike were: on summary conviction, a maximum of £10 fine or 3 months' imprisonment; on conviction or indictment, a maximum of two years' imprisonment.

[2] Sir Hartley Shawcross, *Commons* (February 12th, 1946). In *Rex v. Tearse and others* (1945), the Court of Criminal Appeal maintained that a person could not be convicted of acting 'in furtherance' of an illegal strike if the acts complained of were done before the strike had started. For this reason, the Court quashed convictions of the appellants for acting in furtherance of an illegal strike. (The possibilities of evasion of legal restrictions on striking were instructively illustrated in the U.S.A. in 1948. John L. Lewis then felt himself able to defy the threat of an injunction under the Taft-Hartley Act by staging a strike in which bituminous coal miners were said to be 'avoiding the pits by voluntary individual choice . . . "Any action you may care to take continues to be entirely from your own determination without direction of any character from me" ' (*Observer* (April 4th, 1948).) Although in this instance the strike was held to be caused, if not called, by Mr. Lewis, the incident illustrates how a strike may be imaginatively presented as an act of mass voluntary absenteeism.)

leaders getting the advertisement of a cheap martyrdom, and so encouraging the rest of the men to prolong the contest.'[1] In fact it is socially impossible to punish large numbers of strikers, nor is it useful to punish trade unions or officials, for strikes often happen in defiance of the unions. Legal prohibition of striking may, however, have the effect of making the workers turn to political rather than industrial action. It may merely embitter such strikes as do occur; Mr. Joyce Cary,[2] for example, has remarked that in West and East Africa, strikes have 'followed almost the usual course of industrial disputes in a democratic country; there was plenty of violent language and very little violence, much negotiation and a settlement by agreement. In South Africa, where strikes are forbidden, they have always tended to violence and bloodshed'.

In this country, at any rate since 1906, blanket restrictions on striking have been imposed only under the impact of war. These restrictions may be thought of lesser importance because it has been understood that they were purely 'emergency' measures. They have represented, of course, not a guarantee against all strikes but a guarantee against almost all Union-supported strikes; but the guarantee has come at a time of labour shortage when the support of a Union is less important than in more 'normal' times, and when any considerable prosecution of strikers would be risky because of its effect on morale as well as production. Yet in this respect war shaped a pattern of industrial relations which persisted into peacetime.

In the first world war the Unions accepted an industrial truce, virtually giving up the right to strike in return for compulsory arbitration under the Treasury Agreements and the 1915 Munitions of War Act.[3] Similarly, during the second world war, while Defence Regulation 1A contained a proviso acknowledging the right to strike,[4] Regulation 58AA (1940) — which was supplemented by the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order (1940, S.R. & O., No. 1305) — in effect prohibited strikes and lockouts, making it an offence to participate in them. A further Defence Regulation 1AA (1944, amending Regulation 1A) made it an offence, outside a regularly-convened Trade Union

[1] See *Industrial Unrest*, Report of the Unionist Social Reform Committee (1914), pp. 11-14. The Wise Act laid it down that '(1) If any person does any act or thing in the nature of a lock-out or strike, or takes part in a lock-out or strike, or suspends or discontinues employment or work in any industry, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding one thousand pounds, or in default to imprisonment not exceeding two months. (2) If any person instigates or aids in any of the above-mentioned acts he shall be liable to imprisonment for a period of twelve months.'

[2] *The Case for African Freedom* (1944), p. 68. (One or two strikes in Nigeria, however, have been marked by extreme violence.)

[3] The Munitions Act provided for the enforcement, with penalties, of the Treasury Conference decisions. It was worded in such a way that compulsory arbitration could be applied to trades not coming within the definition of munitions work, if a specific 'proclamation' were made (as it was, for example, in the case of dockers in Liverpool, Glasgow and London). Not only were strikes illegalized, but also any action which might be claimed to have the effect of restricting production. The Munitions of War (Amendment) Act of 1916 brought more industries directly within the scope of the regulations; miners and textile workers, however, had made separate arrangements. See, in general, the *12th Report of Proceedings under the Conciliation Act*, 1896 (1919).

[4] Regulation 1A made it an offence to do any act having reasonable grounds to believe that it would be likely to prevent or interfere with the carrying on of their work by persons engaged in the performance of essential services. But 'a person shall not be guilty of an offence against this Regulation by reason only of his taking part in, or peacefully persuading any other person to take part in, a strike'. (It was this clause which was amended by Regulation 1AA.)

meeting, for anyone to instigate or abet a strike. (This was thought to have been aimed at Trotskyists.)[1]

Dr. Barou has maintained that 'one important loophole' existed in the prohibition of strikes under the National Arbitration Order of 1940: 'Union officials were not permitted . . . to call on the workers to leave their places of work, but there was nothing to prevent the workers themselves from organizing "unofficial" strikes. That is to say, the organization of a strike, and the strike itself, were not illegal, but could receive no support from the union or recognition from the Ministry of Labour' (*sic*). The actual terms of the Order[2] are however quite specific: 'An employer shall not declare or take part in a lockout and a worker shall not take part in a strike in connection with any trade dispute' — unless existing conciliation procedure has been exhausted and the Minister has failed, within the time prescribed, to refer the dispute to the National Arbitration Tribunal for settlement. Thus what Barou called 'the strike itself' *was*, within the given conditions, formally illegal,[3] and remained so after the war ended.

Certain disputes, of course — notably those concerning Union jurisdiction and Union recognition — are more difficult than others to settle by arbitration. Some disputes of this kind may not come under the heading of 'trade disputes'[4] at all as defined in the National Arbitration Order; and in these cases strikes have been technically quite legal, and have sometimes had official backing.[5] The reinstatement of individuals is also a special question, although — as a possible cause of a 'trade dispute' — it appeared to come within the scope of the National Arbitration Order; but, although the National Arbitration Tribunal certainly dealt with such cases during the war, they now fall outside its competence, a recent judgment having established that no Tribunal may direct the reinstatement of a worker.[6]

The experience of this wartime legislation amply illustrates the impracticability of applying sanctions to strikers. In 1916, many strike leaders — particularly on the Clyde — preferred a martyr's imprisonment to the payment of fines. The Balfour Committee therefore recommended the abandonment of the power to imprison for strike offences, and the recommendation was adopted in the 1916 Munitions of War (Amendment) Act. In the words of Sir Lyndon

[1] Engineering strikes took place in 1944 in Belfast, Cheshire and on the Tyne: 'of these only that on the Tyne could possibly have been Trotskyist influenced. The subsequent release of the Trotskyists alleged to be responsible hardly suggests that it was so motivated'. (McRae, *Organized Labour in War-Time, Fabian Quarterly* (January 1945).) (During the first world war, systematic incitement to strike was covered by an amendment of November 30th, 1915 to Regulation 42 of the Defence Regulations.)

[2] See *Ministry of Labour Gazette* for August 1940, pp. 235, 206 and 210.

[3] *British Trade Unions* (1947), pp. 154-5. The instigation of a strike did however not become illegal until 1944, and then only for persons engaged in 'essential services'; and the rights of Trade Union members to support what course of action they pleased in properly-constituted Union meetings was explicitly safeguarded. For a discussion on certain legal aspects of 1AA, see *Ministry of Labour Gazette for April* 1944, p. 59.

[4] ' "Trade Dispute" means any dispute or difference between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, connected with the employment or non-employment, or the terms of the employment or with the conditions of labour of any person.'

[5] Virtually all official strikes since 1940 have been of this kind, the most notable exception being the official strike of some 20,000 vehicle builders in April 1948, which arose out of the failure to grant a wage claim.

[6] In the Crowther case (see *The Times* (November 12th, 1947); 1948 T.U.C. *Report*, p. 215; and cf. *Labour Gazette* (December 1947), p. 402).

Macassey, summarizing his considerable wartime experience in a letter to *The Times* of January 27th, 1945,

> 'imprisonment for non-payment of fines for illegal war-time striking, however juridically logical and theoretically justifiable, was, under modern conditions [i.e. those of 1916] industrially ineffective and nationally undesirable ... in practice it operated to impair respect for the rule of law. You cannot imprison the whole of a large body of strikers. Alternatively, to pick out a selected few and make examples of them only elevates them into popular martyrs, and brings in the always effective industrial rallying cry of "victimization" ...
>
> 'To maintain imprisonment as the punishment in the last resort for illegal war-time strikers serves to relieve the trade unions of the duty and responsibility which, especially in war-time, ought to rest squarely upon them, of disciplining their members and, to the utmost of their power, vigilantly preventing war-time strikes, and, when they have unfortunately occurred, of courageously and resolutely intervening to end them, instead of leaving it to the Government to try to do so by the always ineffective remedy of legal proceedings against certain of the strikers.'

Section 13 of the 1916 Munitions of War (Amendment) Act, which in effect abolished imprisonment for illegal wartime striking was, however, a cryptic one — possibly intentionally so.

There is no account of the extent to which the imposition of legal penalties was attempted, bar the Returns made by the Munitions Tribunals to the Ministry of Munitions.[1] According to these returns, which cover the period July 1915 to July 1916, the total number of prosecutions for illegal strikes was 56, involving 1612 workers, of whom 1006 were convicted — £1365 being collected in fines from the convicted strikers. (There was only one prosecution for illegal lockout, which did not result in a conviction.) These procedures and penalties represent an infinitesimal fraction of what was possible under the Munitions Acts;[2] but as big strikes — on the Clyde, at Barrow, and elsewhere — continued to break out, heavier weapons had to be used which had not been designed to meet strikes at all. Such were, for example, the Defence of the Realm Act and (in the widespread engineering strikes of 1918) the Military Service Acts; the line taken being that the strikers had acted 'not in pursuance of a trade dispute, but in an endeavour to force the Government to change the national policy essential to the prosecution of the war', and should therefore be conscripted into the forces if they did not resume work.[3]

During the second world war there were a record number of strikes, although most of these were very short and small. They were, moreover, confined to few industries: more than half the strikes were coal strikes. Once more, the prosecution of strikers was undertaken 'in only a small proportion of possible cases'.[4] An I.L.O. Report[5] stated that, during the first year of operation of the National Arbitration Order, there had only been three cases (out of about one thousand

[1] *Cd.* 8143 (1915) and *Cd.* 8360 (1916).
[2] See CHANG, *British Methods of Industrial Peace* (New York, 1936), pp. 100, 103.
[3] This last was one of the expedients attributed to Peter the Great.
[4] Mr. David Grenfell, Secretary of State for Mines, in *Commons* (May 7th, 1942).
[5] *Government-Employer-Worker Collaboration* (Montreal, 1944), p. 23.

strikes involving more than a quarter of a million workers and getting on for a million working days lost) in which workers had been prosecuted; in two of these the strikers were bound over, in the third each striker was fined £5 and 3s. costs. By January 1944[1] it was estimated that some 5000 strikers (out of about one-and-a-half million) had been proceeded against under wartime regulations. Sentences were imposed in only some of these cases; the prosecutions themselves sometimes resulted in further strikes of protest, but these protest-strikers were seldom prosecuted. (The total number found guilty during the same period — i.e. up to January 1944 — was 1917.[2])

The inexpediency of imposing legal penalties for striking was once again emphasized in a post-war Parliamentary debate (August 5th, 1947), when Mr. Isaacs, the Minister of Labour, was asked whether a special regulation could be made to illegalize unofficial strikes:

> 'Mr. Isaacs: No regulation is necessary as these strikes are already illegal.
> 'Lt. Col. Sir Thomas Moore: If these strikes are illegal, why are they allowed?
> 'Mr. Isaacs: They happen before we can prevent them. . . .
> 'Squadron-Leader Fleming: Can the right hon. gentleman tell us in how many unofficial strikes has legal action been taken against the leaders or anyone taking part in such strikes?
> 'Mr. Isaacs: I cannot give an answer without notice, but I cannot recall any.
> 'Vice-Admiral Taylor: Will the right hon. gentleman take the action which can be taken against these men who start unofficial strikes?
> 'Mr. Isaacs: Circumstances in these cases are examined, but sometimes it is found that by taking precipitate action we might extend the trouble.'[3]

It has not, of course, been by legal prohibitions or political restrictions that strikes have been controlled, so much as by the development of a powerful Union leadership and the evolution of voluntary and statutory procedures for negotiating wages and working conditions as well as for avoiding disputes. In the second world war, the average yearly loss of working time through strikes was less than half what it had been in the first; and it was the change in the whole background of Trade Unionism, rather than the perfection of legal restrictions on striking, which was largely responsible for the decline. Moreover, the great differences in the political atmosphere — both foreign and domestic — of the two wars must have contributed to the differences in the incidence and severity, and indeed in the whole character, of the strikes which accompanied them.[4]

Further restrictions

It is impossible to list all the measures which have been or could conceivably be directed against strikers at discretion. The use of legislation for purposes

[1] See *Monthly Labor Review* (August 1946), pp. 226-7.
[2] 50 in 1941; 588 in 1942; 1279 in 1943; none in 1944, and 125 in 1945 – a grand total for the whole war period of 2042. (See *Criminal Statistics (England and Wales)*, 1939-1945: *Cmd.* 7227.)
[3] See *Hansard*, vol. 441, No. 157, col. 1275.
[4] The political contrasts have been well summarized by McRae, in *Organized Labour in War-Time, Fabian Quarterly* (January 1945).

unsuspected by its sponsors is of course a commonplace of history; witness some of the early modes of attack on British Trade Unions, and, in the U.S.A., the use of anti-trust legislation. A modern instance in this country is the 1936 Public Order Act, which was passed with general approval in view of the anti-Semitic activities of Mosley Fascism; but the first prosecutions under Section 2 of this Act (which raised the penalty for 'insulting words and behaviour' from 40s. fine to 3 months' imprisonment) were not of British Fascists, but of miners on strike at Harworth.

How far general legislation is able to be used against strikers, however, depends on the strength of the Labour movement.

* * *

Section 2: Other provisions

We now come to those measures which have been designed to break strikes or otherwise minimize their effects. Methods of combating strikes are almost as varied as methods of striking. An American writer speaks of 'sending foremen to talk to the workers individually, thereby separating them from the group, spreading discouraging rumours, advertising in the paper, insisting on secret balloting by the workers when they voted on the issue of returning to work, and, above all, threatening to move their factories elsewhere should the workers continue their demands and join the union' — all being done in the course of a single strike.[1] In the United States the techniques of strike-breaking are more elaborate than in this country;[2] although strike ballots, mutual indemnification by employers during strikes, the blacklisting of strikers, the employment of spies and *agents provocateurs*, and above all of course the use of blacklegs (civilian or military) have all occurred here during the present century.

Strike ballots

Strike ballots deserve mention because the taking of a ballot may not only inhibit the declaration of a strike but may also curtail its duration.[3] Voting for or against the declaration or maintenance of a strike is like voting for or against a war; it tends, one might think, to pacifism. Moreover, if voting always had to take place before a strike, lightning strikes would be precluded altogether.

Proposals have sometimes been made — with these objects, as well as to prevent intimidation — for voting on strikes to be made obligatory; a bill to this effect was drawn up, for example, in 1923-24, providing for a secret ballot supervised by independent officials.[4] On the whole, however, it seems to have been considered inadvisable to insist on a vote, since the voting on major strike

[1] See WARNER and LOW, *The Social System of the Modern Factory: A Social Analysis* (Yale, 1947), p. 32.

[2] See, for example, *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike of* 1919 (Supplementary Reports of the Commission of Inquiry of the Interchurch World Movement, 1921); and, in general the findings of the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee.

[3] See, for example, the elaborate voting procedure of the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twiners, 1921 (MILNE-BAILEY, *Trade Union Documents* (1929), p. 312f).

[4] *The Times* (January 19th, 1924).

issues might sometimes be too compelling a demonstration of workers' solidarity.[1]

Regarding the ballot *before* the strike, workers' objections have naturally been strongest in those industries where surprise is considered essential to the success of a strike — e.g. in transport, but not in mining. In 1914, when negotiations were under way for the establishment of the Triple Alliance, the M.F.G.B. tried to get other Unions to adopt the ballot rule, but without success. The transport Unions distrusted the miners' ballot; while they were expected to act automatically in support of the miners, action of the miners on their behalf — since it depended on the result of a ballot — could not be equally automatic. They were against taking a ballot themselves because this would give the employers time to develop means to break their strike.

The insistence on frequent (secret) ballots *during* a strike, on the question of returning to work, has also been opposed as a tactic favouring the employers — presumably because it involves many private individual decisions instead of a public collective one. Once a strike is in progress, different considerations weigh with men as individuals from those which activate them as members of a group; men who would be ashamed to 'weaken' in a strikers' meeting may do so on a ballot paper. This point was implied in a pamphlet on a strike of 1919;[2] and at Hyde Park, Sydney, in 1929, strike ballots were publicly burnt by the strikers.[3]

It has been sardonically suggested that 'strike votes for the female adult dependants of the trade unionists is the least tribute that our sturdy democrats of Organized Labour can lay upon the shrine of Omnipotent Democracy'.[4]

Mutual indemnification by employers

A writer was complaining in 1891[5] that 'the average modern strike — the "on principle" strike [usually for Trade Union recognition] is not a spontaneous movement on the part of the workers in the factory itself, as a strike should be', and 'the men in such circumstances cannot be said to *strike*, they are *drawn out*'. One of the commonest methods of meeting these Union-inspired strikes was for other employers to subsidize the employer whose men were on strike:

[1] Cf., from American experience, the veto message of President Truman to the House of Representatives on the Taft-Hartley Act, dated June 20th, 1947 (supplement to the *Survey of Labor Economics* (January 1948)): 'This entire procedure is based upon the same erroneous assumptions as those which underlay the strike-vote provision of the War Labor Disputes Act, namely, that strikes are called in haste as the result of inflamed passions, and that union leaders do not represent the wishes of the workers.'

[2] *The Campbell Strike* (1919), p. 14.

[3] See L. STRACHEY, *Strike Struggles in Australia, Labour Monthly* (February 1931).

[4] F. H. ROSE, *Stop the Strike; A Plea for Industrial Peace* (1921) – Similarly a pamphleteer of 1884, writing under the title '*No More Strikes! No More Lock-outs! How to increase Wages with advantage to Masters and Men and the advancement of trade in General*', begged his reader to read the pamphlet to his wife, 'and ask *her* which is the most *manly* course to pursue – to go out on strike and live on the hard earnings of your fellow men, – to part with your clothing and your home, bit by bit, which you would most certainly have to do if the strike continued, getting little by little as opportunity occurred, and trade prospered; she will answer you in a straight-forward manner, without prevarication or argument, for it is one of the most beautiful attributes of the true woman that she cannot argue . . .' The support given by women to men on strike is, however, almost proverbial; witness the activity of women in the 1926 coal strike.

[5] J. STAFFORD RANSOME, '*On Principle*' *Strikes* and *Capital at Bay* (1891), reprinted from articles in the *Globe*.

> 'in itself, this is not new, as ever since masters' associations have been in existence it has been carried on with more or less success as a drain on union funds. Until recently, however, it has been, with few exceptions, merely of a spasmodic and unsystematic character; but recent labour troubles have done a great deal towards developing and perfecting it, until subsidising has gradually become so extended a policy that in most strikes something of the sort is going on, although the public does not necessarily hear of it at the time . . . It might be thought that this could only be carried out in the case of masters' associations where those who subsidise are not direct competitors of those whom they are subsidising. But this is not so. . . .'

In shipping, the firms subscribed *pro rata* on their vessels' tonnage, and were indemnified on the same principle; in coal-mining, according to tons of coal produced; in other industries the calculations were based on wage-bills, and in some cases on the capital, on which a certain interest was paid for the period of the strike. So common was the practice that a central fund of employers was suggested; but it began to be realized that to prolong strikes in this way was a two-edged weapon, since in the meantime trade might go elsewhere. Hence some employers were said to favour 'putting a backbone into free labour, by encouraging it with benefits, and protecting it on a more general scale than has yet been effected'. However, mutual indemnification was certainly quite widespread in the following decade; the Royal Commission Report of 1906[1] quotes rules of employers' associations providing for it in mining, engineering, shipbuilding, clothing, furniture-making, building, and bleaching and dyeing.

The pre-1914 strike wave, moreover, gave an impetus to the practice, and again a general scheme was outlined (by Alexander Wilson, a Liverpool employer, in *The Times* of August 23rd, 1911). It was proposed to form 'a large mutual insurance company', each employer subscribing a sum equal to 10 per cent of his annual wage bill in order to insure against three kinds of loss through strikes: loss of profit; depreciation of plant or material; and loss of selling connexions. Insurance companies in general have been unwilling to insure against any form of strike loss other than direct damage to property, on the ground that the risks insured against are not beyond the control of the policy-holder.[2] In this scheme, therefore, 'some provision would be necessary to define what strikes would give rise to a claim, otherwise an employer might, in effect, foment a strike to his own advantage'. Thus it had to be shown that the stoppage in question was 'caused by matters entirely outside the control of the assured'; a category which included sympathetic strikes, lockouts caused by the workers refusing to obey an arbitral award, and stoppages made necessary by strikes in other businesses. In other cases, the establishment of a claim would depend upon the 'reasonableness' of the employer, which was to be determined by two arbitrators chosen — one by the employer and one by the company — from a yearly panel, with the addition of an umpire chosen from the same panel by the two arbitrators. These three men were to take evidence both from the employers and from the workers: 'I suggest', wrote the proposer of the scheme, 'that this latter

[1] *Report of Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations* (1906), *Cd.* 2825, p. 78f.

[2] See also p. 282.

provision would have a most potent effect in inducing reasonable action by an employer, as he would otherwise lose the benefit of his insurance. It would also exercise a calming influence upon the workmen, as they would know that the coercive effect of a strike would be nullified unless the employer were unreasonable.' It was considered that the scheme would be proof against anything but a general strike, against which sterner measures would be necessary. Such proposals are characteristic mainly of the years before 1914; but employers' associations have continued to include among their main objects the protection of members against strikes or against losses incurred by acting in conformity with decisions of the association — provision being made for pecuniary, legal or other assistance.[1]

Blacklisting

By a decision of the Courts in 1902 the legality of the employers' black list was asserted, and, although the practice was questioned by the Royal Commission in 1904, it has since been confirmed.[2] Allegations of employer-blacklisting are not uncommon, particularly in the engineering and shipbuilding industries, although one would hardly expect to find precise evidence. An interesting case, however, of the use of the black list in order to break a strike by converting it into a nation-wide lockout of the strikers was given in the Commons by Arthur Henderson[3] in 1927, during the debate on the Trade Disputes Bill. A wages dispute had arisen in Southampton, in the course of which the men concerned (shipwrights) decided to leave their work and — in some cases — to find work elsewhere. 'The secret machinery' of the employers 'at once came into operation . . . I have here the names of 16 firms who at once committed themselves not to employ a single one of these men as long as this dispute lasted.' Mr. Henderson quoted from correspondence: ' "I feel that if your local firms will only hold together and keep the men out for a few weeks, the shipwrights will then have learnt a lesson which will bring them back to your terms." ' ' "Seeing that some of our men are going North looking for employment, I have also been in communication with the Secretaries of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, asking that the Federated firms will accord us the same support as has been promised by the Southern and East Coast firms." ' ' "If you will kindly forward us a list of the names of the men on strike, we will at once circulate these amongst the Federated firms." ' ' "On behalf of the employers I wish to express appreciation of this action of your Committee [the Emergency Committee of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation], and their assurance that if at any time in future they are able to reciprocate your action, they will be only too willing to do so." ' The employers went so far as to apply to the Labour Exchange for shipwrights, so that ' "the local Exchange will not be able to send men out of the port at the Government expense, knowing that there is work for

[1] RICHARDSON, *Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (1938), p. 86. Some employers' associations provide for pecuniary assistance to be given to workers employed by a member firm who have suffered loss or injury in the firm's interests in connexion with a strike.

[2] *Bulcock v. St. Anne's Master Builders' Federation and others*, 1902. *Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations*, 1904, *Minutes of Evidence*, Q. 4658-75. Cf. also *Davies v. Thomas*, 1920.

[3] May 3rd, 1927. Evidence of blacklisting had also been given to the House in 1906; and the Royal Commission of 1892-94 had been informed about it more than once.

them in the Port. The expense of sending the men away will then fall entirely upon Trade Union funds." '

The threat of a Trade Union black list of strikers is, however, new, and reflects the power and attitude of big Unions since the second world war. Mr. Will Lawther, President of the N.U.M., told members of a recalcitrant Union that strikers would not only have their jobs filled but would be banned from employment in the mines; 'the miners will insist on a black list of the strikers'.[1]

Spies and agents provocateurs

> 'You and your Strike Committee, and your secrets and your gallivanting here, there and everywhere like a lot of generals. Secret, indeed! I bet the police know the names of every one of you already. And they'll know where to come when they want you.'
>
> *Lightning Strike*: B.B.C. Feature Programme, December 5th, 1947.

Industrial spies and *agents provocateurs* have not been common in Britain — as they have, for instance, in the United States[2] — since the early nineteenth century. Private agencies have been almost unknown.[3] Isolated instances of spying have, however, been alleged during the present century; for example, on the Clyde in 1912 and the following years,[4] and again during the strike wave of 1917-18, when the Attorney-General is stated to have claimed the existence of a widespread system of industrial espionage.[5] In 1926 the T.U.C. General Council issued a warning: Section 4 of their 'Proposals for Co-ordinated Action of Trade Unions'[6] ran as follows:

> 'A strong warning must be issued to all localities that any person found inciting the workers to riot must be dealt with immediately. It should be pointed out that the opponents will in all probability employ persons to act

[1] *Daily Express* (January 9th, 1948). The other Union concerned was that of the winding enginemen (see pp. 41-2).

[2] It was stated in the middle 1930s that in the U.S.A. there were some 220 agencies, employing thousands of operatives (estimates varied from 40,000 as the total figure to 135,000 as the figure of spies employed by the biggest firms only) – the cost to industry being said to amount to some $80,000,000 per year.

[3] In 1874 a Mr. Pollacky advertised an espionage service in connexion with strikes, but the advertisement (at any rate) was very soon withdrawn under Trade Union pressure. (See JEFFERYS (ed.), *Labour's Formative Years*, 1849-1879 (1948), p. 115.)

[4] See GALLACHER, *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936), pp. 59, 212, etc.

[5] FOX, *Class Struggles in Britain* (1933), vol. II, p. 36; *Rearmament and the Trade Unions* (National Peace Council pamphlet), p. 3. (A certain number of engineering firms organized an espionage system during the first world war, although some of the better firms refused to join.) Warnings against spies are found in the strike literature of the years following – e.g. in the *Strike Bulletin* of the 40-Hours' Movement (of shipbuilders and others) for February 7th, 1919. One of the more colourful instances was the Watson episode. W. F. Watson, who took part in the Amalgamation Movement, was suspected of espionage in the service of the authorities, and defended himself by a plea of counter-espionage. He gives an account of his role in *Watson's Reply* (June 1920).

[6] Dated May 1st, 1926. The Economic League was said at one time to be offering employers information about 'subversive activities' in their works in return for a contribution based on the size of their payrolls. (See HEINEMANN, *Britain's Coal* (1944), p. 130.) The activities of the League in this connexion were the subject of a sensational front-page 'exposure' in the *Daily Worker* of May 8th, 1937. Spying for narrower disciplinary purposes is probably more common; *Busman's Punch* (No. 8, June 1933) alleged that London busmen were liable to be reported by their employers' spies for 'anything and everything'.

as spies and others to use violent language in order to incite the workers to disorder.'

Since that date, one may instance the allegation that 'a number of firms carry on assiduous spying which leads to victimization of employees suspected of organization';[1] and the 'well-oiled espionage system' ascribed to a London firm in a T.U.C. publication in 1937.[2] All in all, however, there is negative evidence for saying that organized industrial spying has been rare. In consequence, counter-espionage is rarer; although there has been mention of this also; 'we have, of course,' wrote Mr. Hamilton Fyfe in 1926,[3] 'our informants in the ranks of Baldwin's people, and know pretty well all that is going on in their camp'.

Organized strike-breaking

> 'I did the work that my soul and brain ached to do. I tried to do it manfully. I broke their strikes. I am a blackleg, my Lord God Almighty. I was called the King of the Blacklegs. And if ever in Thy divine and infinite wisdom it pleases Thee to thrust my soul into a human mould once more, I will rise up a blackleg and break their strikes again — so help me, God!'
>
> Projected speech for Judgment Day, by William Collison (*The Apostle of Free Labour* (1913), p. 328).

Employers — shipowners provide the best case in point — have certainly been known to recruit permanent strike-breaking bodies, as distinct from appealing for blacklegs *ad hoc*. In the past they founded or supported organizations for the provision of 'free labourers' to replace strikers. By 'free labourers' was meant not necessarily non-Unionists, but labourers pledged to work amicably with others whether Union members or not. A system of shipping offices, and similar offices for shore labourers in some ports, was established by the Shipping Federation on its formation in 1890;[4] the men being required to give a pledge that they would work with non-Unionists. Similarly, London manufacturers proposed an organization for the 'protection of free labour' and the 'prevention of unfair picketing'.[5]

The shipowners, indeed, seem to have been a mainstay of Mr. William Collison's 'National Free Labour Association', which was founded in 1893 to combat the New Unionism. Collison was the son of a policeman, and he organized a busmen's Union and stage-managed at Olympia before canalizing his experience of police, Trade Union and showmanship methods into a career of strike-breaking. The work of his blacklegs did not necessarily end when the strike was broken; such men as employers wished to retain were left as perma-

[1] John Parker, M.P., Secretary of New Fabian Research Bureau, in *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), p. 242.

[2] *Industrial News* (November 23rd, 1937).

[3] *Behind the Scenes of the Great Strike* (1926) p. 28. Similarly in the 1889 dock strike, strikers were sent in to work as apparent blacklegs in order to gain information about the influx of actual blacklegs.

[4] See *Report of Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892 (c. 6708 v.) vol. XXXV, Appendices VIII and XL; also CLEM EDWARDS (Dockers' Union), *The Hull Shipping Dispute*, *Economic Journal* (August 1893), pp. 345-51.

[5] *The Times*, October 6th, 1911.

nent workers,[1] at wages which, according to Collison, 'often exceed, and are never less than, the Trade Union rate'. Although in his autobiography he complained of the 'tall talk' of his opponents, modesty did not prevent him from claiming, in evidence before the 1904 Royal Commission on Trade Disputes, to have registered no less than 500,000 potential scabs, representing some 150 trades, complete with 'trained emergency men' for their protection.[2] In this he was flatly accused of lying by Mr. W. Ellis, an erstwhile colleague who now ran a 'Provincial Free Labour Association' in Glasgow.

But although their strength was wishfully exaggerated, it is clear that quite a number of 'independent agencies' for supplying employers with labour during strikes existed before 1914; other bodies than Collison's were mentioned in evidence before the 1904 Commission.[3] The pre-war strike wave, moreover, gave an impulse to the formation of strike-controlling organizations of various kinds. The establishment of a national corps of strike-breakers ('General Strikebreakers') was advocated in *The Times* of August 26th, 1911; a 'Volunteer Police Force' was formed in December of that year, in view of the problems set by the railway strike; and further reference to a 'Civilian Force', of which some members served as special constables, appeared in February 1912.

Although Pinkerton methods never reached the American scale, the years after the war saw a further development of strike-breaking organizations. So revolutionary was the temper of the time that any big strike, even on the narrowest industrial issue, might be the occasion for revolt.[4] The Government had been compelled to temporize in the mining and railway disputes, but as early as February 1919 it had begun, in Lloyd George's words,[5] to build up under the Home Secretary a 'purely civilian organization' of 'well-disposed citizens' in order to provide alternative transport in the event of a strike. In fact, a considerable variety of organizations sprang up, unofficially, semi-officially, and officially, to cope with the strike threat; and the experience gained over the intervening years was used to full purpose in 1926.

[1] See *The Apostle of Free Labour* (1913), p. 100. – The permanent engagement of blacklegs was attempted in a strike of Leith coal-trimmers in 1924, but was prevented by the T. & G.W.U. threatening a national strike of these workers (see Report of Court of Inquiry, *Cmd.* 2149, 1924).

[2] *Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations*, 1906, *Minutes of Evidence* (*Cd.* 2826), pp. 261-2, 306-7, and 201f. Collison claimed that by 1913 850,000 men had been registered, and that the Association had won 'no less than six hundred and eighty-two pitched battles with Trade Unions'. P. Louis, in *Le Syndicalisme Européen* (1914, p. 78), reported that the Association claimed to have registered 131,000 members in 1895, 400,000 in 1902, and 786,000 in 1912; Halévy doubts whether it ever had more than 30,000 members at any one time.

[3] For example, the 'Association of Non-Unionists', and the 'Labour Protection Association' (the latter consisting of 'big, strong, powerful fellows' who had been in the Army or the Metropolitan Police, and were recruited in the course of a big engineering strike). The Association of Non-Unionists graded its worker-members into subscribing members and others, the subscribing members being given jobs first. Employers were supplied with labour without being charged for the service, though voluntary contributions were expected. The Association claimed to have supplied nearly 500 employers in a single year. Askwith (*Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 82) also mentions the employment of bodies of 'free labour', supplied from Lancashire to meet a Scottish textile strike.

[4] Cf. the language used in the Council of Action (see, for example, the *Report of the Special Conference on Labour and the Russo-Polish War*, in the Central Hall, Westminster (August 13th, 1920), pp. 16-18.)

[5] Speech at Mansion House (October 7th, 1919), after the settlement of the railway strike.

It has been pointed out that the details of the organization which was being developed must have been known to the T.U.C. by 1926; to quote Lloyd George once again,[1] it had been 'in continuous readiness since the war. The Coalition Government of 1919 not only elaborated the scheme, but used it; since then it has been handed down from Government to Government and progressively improved. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his Ministry not only took it over, but were ready and even anxious to make use of it . . . during the two threatened emergencies of 1924.'[2] Plans had in fact been made during the war to ensure deliveries of food at a moment's notice, in the event of a transport, or general, strike.

In 1919 (as not in 1926) the Government still controlled food supplies, and was able to work through the 16 divisional areas, each with its commissioner and staff, into which the country had been divided — the necessary powers being made available to the Food Controller (Mr. G. H. Roberts, one-time Labour M.P. for Norwich) by the provisions of the 1919 Food Controller Road Transport (Requisition) Order. Retailers had been encouraged to hold reserve stocks of food, and the Ministry of Food's Divisional Commissioners had control of additional reserves which had been put by in special depots. The main foods were rationed; restaurant meals were controlled; and each Divisional Food Commissioner was empowered to fix maximum food prices where this had not been done. The whole plan went into operation by the sending of a one-word telegram to the Divisional Commissioners. Admiralty assistance was also provided, yeast being transported by ship from distilleries in Scotland and Ireland.[3] The Strike Emergency Committee held daily sessions at the Ministry of Food in the autumn of 1919 both to cope with the existing railway strike and to provide for any extension of the outbreak which the Triple Alliance might be able to achieve.

By the time of the coal strike in 1921, the Ministry of Food, with its 11,000 officials, had just been disbanded; but the Strike Emergency Organization was at once put under the control of Sir Eric Geddes and Mr. McCurdy (lately Food Controller). The first steps of the transition were being made to the 'voluntary' organization of 1926, which operated mainly by means of some 150 voluntary Haulage Committees. It was by now considered preferable for the Government not to have the responsibility of organizing transport: Crook quotes reports that during the 1919 railway strike 'volunteer drivers came into service, took out Government-owned or Government-requisitioned trucks, took them to distant destinations and were never seen afterwards. Indeed, more than once the driver would vanish and his truck load of goods would vanish with him!' In 1926 it was the local contractor who was responsible.

The organization of volunteers developed as follows. In the 1919 strike, 'well-disposed citizens' were drawn from the Automobile Association, the

[1] Preface to GLASGOW, *General Strikes and Road Transport* (1926).

[2] The Labour Government of 1924, wrote Mr. George Lansbury later, 'not merely had the machinery on paper to deal with the Passenger Transport dispute, but had chosen a good anarchist as head of the strike-breakers, with a number of socialists as assistants. The Government of which I was a member found itself in a similar position when a miners' strike was threatened, though no public statement on the subject was made at the time'. (Quoted in *Busman's Punch*, No. 19 (May 1934).)

[3] This was also done in 1926.

Middle Classes' Union (founded in March 1919),[1] and other bodies. Some of the unemployed were also pressed into service; the Government ordered that unemployment benefit should not be paid to anyone who refused to maintain transport services. The F.B.I., while not specifically concerned with labour questions, instructed its officials to get into touch with local authorities and the local transport officers; local authorities were asked to form 'Citizen Guards' to co-operate in the maintenance of order (October 4th, 1919). Three days earlier, a leading article in *The Times* had discussed the best method of enlisting 'labour volunteers' to break the 'new praetorianism' of industrial workers. While a standing army of 'civil volunteers' might be organized by the State (this would obviate having to use the military), it was preferable that the volunteers should be organized by private association; after all, *The Times* added optimistically, 'with the possible exception of coal mining, the work of the key industries is such as could be learned by able-bodied and intelligent men in far less time than it takes to make an efficient soldier'. Next day (October 2nd), in a description of the repercussions of the British railway strike in Paris, a French journal was quoted as stating that the mass organization of strike-breakers 'will now become one of the main preoccupations of Government in countries destined to suffer by Labour pretensions against the community. Every citizen will thus be invited to fill his allotted post in the event of a strike as in the event of a war.'

Thus the possibility of *levée en masse* to meet the mass strike was being widely canvassed. In the years following, new organizations sprang up, and existing bodies found room among their activities to prepare against the strike menace. The Middle Classes' Union, for example, became the National Citizens' Union; it registered its members to support the Government in the 1921 coal strike and was thanked for the part it had played in it. The British Empire Union, which had been founded in 1915 and had carried on a certain amount of anti-alien agitation during the war years, was involved in industrial questions towards the end of 1919, and in 1920 set up an 'industrial peace department' against 'the dangers of revolution and communism, etc.'. The British Fascists (the first body of their kind, and formed in 1923),[2] whose primary objects were 'to render practical, and, if necessary, militant defence of His Majesty the King and the Empire', issued a circular stating that 'should revolution, or a general strike be threatened, men's units would form the active force, and the women's units the auxiliary force'.[3] The National Guard, which was 'an organization formed

[1] A more detailed account of many of these organizations was published in a 'White Paper' of the *Labour Research Department* (No. 13, on *Strike-Breaking Organizations*) – from which some of the above material is taken. According to this publication, the Middle Classes' Union provided several thousand volunteers in the 1919 railway strike, and 500 volunteers in the Southampton strike of May 1920 – as well as participating in several local disputes. – The industrial policy of the M.C.U. included compulsory arbitration in all strikes, as well as a secret ballot under Government control (*The Times*, February 27th 1920).

[2] They were followed by the 'National Fascisti' (1925-27); the 'Imperial Fascist League'; the 'United Empire Fascist Party'; and the 'British Union of Fascists' which was formed in 1932 from the rump of Sir Oswald Mosley's New Party. The B.U.F. had as at subsidiary a 'Fascist Union of British Workers' whose influence seems to have been negligible. (See T.U.C. *Report* for 1935, pp. 449-50.)

[3] The British Fascists disclaimed in 1925 the objective of strike-breaking, but stated that, in the event of a General Strike, they would 'most certainly co-operate wholeheartedly with the authorities in the direction of safeguarding the food supply, and of assisting to maintain vital services'. There were apparently projects in both Liverpool and Wolver-

for the enrolment of all loyal subjects', and whose object it was 'to assist the Civil Authorities in the enforcement of Law and Order, and in maintaining the essential public services', pledged itself 'to oppose vigorously (by force if necessary) attempts to paralyse any industry of the country which is necessary to the existence, comfort and health of the people'.

The most comprehensive was the Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies. The O.M.S., whose formation was announced to the public on September 25th, 1925, and officially approved by the Home Secretary,[1] existed primarily to provide the Government with manpower to carry on the important public services (e.g. postal, telegraph and telephone) in the event of strikes. O.M.S. members were, however, also trained more or less secretly as railwaymen by factories owning private railways, and as lorry-drivers — using special buses on factory testing grounds at week-ends when the workers were absent. On November 20th, 1925, the famous Ministry of Health Circular 636 was sent out to Local Authorities, making it clear that these authorities should be prepared to keep essential services going in their own areas, leaving the Government to supplement and assist local efforts. Although organization and training were developed continuously, it was asserted by an official of the Ministry of Transport that the scheme was ready in 1925 had it been absolutely necessary to use it.

There is no record of the coverage of these bodies, nor of the degree to which they overlapped, as they clearly did. Some co-ordination is implied by Crook's statement that the Fascists' resources were obtained from various national leagues and citizens' unions federated as a Central Council of Economic Leagues, including some five hundred leading industrial firms. The part played by these bodies in meeting the General Strike as *independent* units seems to have been small: the Fascists' organization, for example, split just before the strike began and was said to have virtually disappeared, though a number of its members found their way into O.M.S. and the special constabulary. The part played by O.M.S. itself, however, which 'put itself promptly at the disposal of the Government and vanished as a separate entity'[2] has been described — perhaps too deprecatingly — as one of 'failure' and 'varying degrees of disaster'[3] — but it kept its register and its framework for future use.

Volunteers, both individual and organized, were thus drawn from many sources. They operated under the Government's scheme of decentralization: the country had been divided into districts, each of which was under a Civil Commissioner responsible to the Chief Civil Commissioner (Sir W. Mitchell-Thomson, the Postmaster-General). The distribution of the volunteers has been given as shown on the next page.[4]

A more authoritative source,[5] which, however, gives no breakdown, puts the total of volunteers at 488,155. The supersession or disappearance of many of

[1] See letter of Sir William Joynson-Hicks in *The Times* (October 1st, 1925).
[2] D. H. ROBERTSON, *Narrative of the General Strike of 1926*, *Economic Journal* (September 1926), p. 385. Its membership was estimated by one source at 75,000 volunteers.
[3] FYFE, *The Great Strike* (1926), p. 68.
[4] *A.B.C.* (All-British Campaign) *Bucks News Budget* (May 14th, 1926).
[5] D. H. ROBERTSON, loc. cit.

hampton to enrol local members *en bloc* into the special constabulary; but, whether because of the resultant protests or not, these plans were shelved.

Division	*Volunteers enrolled*
London	114,184
Home Counties	31,244
North Midland	21,600
North Eastern	25,000
Northern	18,000
Midland	20,569
North Western	35,825
South Midland	21,000
South Wales	12,186
South Western	24,000
(Eastern)	(?)
Total (without Eastern division)	323,608

the voluntary organizations during the strike itself should not blind one to their preparatory propaganda-value in moulding 'public opinion'.

Indeed, the part played by propaganda in big strikes deserves notice. It has been said that propaganda was the most effective weapon on the Government side in 1926.[1] In the dearth of news — on the third day of the strike Reuter reported that only 40 provincial dailies, out of some 1870, were appearing[3] — the part played by the *British Gazette* (with a top circulation claimed to be 2.2 million) as against the *British Worker* (1 million), by heavily censored and 'doctored' B.B.C. reports, and by more or less organized rumour, was considerable. Anti-Government rumours, however, where they could be traced, were scotched at once: two men appeared in Marylebone police court for distributing a leaflet wishfully alleging that the Liverpool police had joined the strikers; three others were sentenced to 21 days' hard labour for selling a further leaflet (*The Fulham Worker*) stating that the Welsh Guards had been confined to barracks for intimidation. Despite formal recognition in a T.U.C. pamphlet of 1925[3] of the need to arouse public opinion, very little was done, and when it came to the point, propaganda on the Trade Union side was incomprehensibly weak. It was certainly far less effective than in the 1919 railway strike, when the Trade Unions voted large sums for publicity, secured — by the threat of further strikes — full page advertisements in the leading national newspapers, and were able to use the cinema and many other methods of conveying their message.[4] In view of the evident success of the campaign of 1919 it is strange

[1] See POSTGATE, WILKINSON and HORRABIN, *Workers' History of the Great Strike*, pp. 52, 57. The attention to detail that lay behind the sending of police on motor cycles round small circuits in key areas, so as to give the impression of an 'endless stream of police on motor cycles' passing a given spot, is impressive.

[2] ARNOT, *The General Strike* (1926), p. 184. Most of the national dailies, of course, continued to appear in some form and on a much restricted scale. Half the copies of the *Daily Mail* which circulated during the strike were said to have been printed by small 'scab' firms, and half in Paris — although the Paris printers tried to prevent this. (See *British Worker* (May 7th, 1926); and *Daily Mail*, Continental edition (May 11th, 1926).)

[3] *The Mining Dispute: Miners' Wages Protected; A Lesson in Trade Union Unity* (1925).

[4] MILNE-BAILEY, *Trade Unions and the State* (1934) p. 53. Details of this remarkable running fight of publicity were recorded in the February 1920 supplement of *Labour Research* (the organ of the Labour Research Department, which played a considerable part, under Bernard Shaw's chairmanship, in the campaign). The campaign included agitation to summon Parliament, articles, news paragraphs, advertisements to counter the Government's categorizing of the strike as an 'anarchist conspiracy' (up to £1500 a day was spent on advertising), posters, handbills, letters to the clergy and other 'formers of opinion', newsreels (including one specially designed for showing in the U.S.A.), and even a special performance at the Old Vic for railwaymen and their families.

to read Crook's assertion that it was largely the experience with the Press during the 1919 railway strike that made the General Council decide to stop all newspapers during the General Strike. But in 1926 the Unions were deliberately limiting the strike in all its aspects to the character of a peaceful demonstration; no less than four censors were attached to the *British Worker* in order to prevent anything remotely provocative or inflammatory appearing.[1] Even when the Trade Disputes Act was being passed in the following year, the *British Worker*, which reappeared in its old format as a weekly from April 29th to June 24th, showed little improvement in its content.

Transport strikes — a special case

Obviously transport strikes are the most immediately paralysing of all strikes. Moreover, so long as railways were almost the only form of overland transport, railway strikes seemed the more menacing because it was very difficult to break them by using blacklegs. But the internal combustion engine altered things decisively; not only because more people can drive a car or lorry than can drive a locomotive, but also because road transport needs a far less elaborate organization. Even in 1911 Lord Montagu was writing to *The Times*[2] on 'Automobilism: Road Transport during Railway Strikes'; by 1919 *The Times* could headline the 'Triumph of the Lorry' during the railway strike while its agony column had a special section headed 'Strike Emergencies', advertising cars and charabancs for hire, and a quantity of Silva Scooters for sale at £50, 'an excellent method of propulsion during the strike crisis'. (During this strike, indeed, the 1918 Road Transport Board — a wartime organization for economizing in road traffic — was still operating.)[3] It was becoming evident that not only would 'automobilism' make it possible to break railway strikes, but a stoppage in road transport services themselves would not present a serious problem in finding blackleg drivers. This was not fully demonstrated until 1926, when it was hailed by Mr. Lloyd George as a 'new truth in political philosophy'.[4] 'The real point is', wrote Glasgow,[5] 'whether the Trade Unions by a sudden strike in the key services can bring the nation to its knees and impose their terms. Road transport has proved that such a thing is next to impossible.' Mrs. Baldwin herself organized a motor car service in 1926.

The 1926 stoppage was remarkably complete on the railways; on the L.M.S., 85 per cent of the wages grades and 41 per cent of the salaried staff left work; on the L.N.E.R., 88 per cent struck, those who remained being mainly clerks or salaried officials.[6] The percentage of trains run, according to the railway companies' accounts and the confidential daily reports of the Ministry of Transport, was correspondingly low, and although this percentage rose during the strike,

[1] Fyfe, *The Great Strike* (1926), p. 33.
[2] *The Times* (August 29th, 1911).
[3] In 1921, in the first number of *Labour Monthly*, there appeared — allegedly from a Norwegian source — a 'secret report on international counter-strike organization', according to which Governments were already pooling their experience in the breaking of transport strikes.
[4] Preface to Glasgow, *General Strikes and Road Transport* (1926), pp. 14-15.
[5] Glasgow, op. cit., pp. 18-19
[6] Contemporary statistics on the extent of the transport stoppage are more fully quoted by Crook, Glasgow and Hutt, in the works already cited. On the railways, as might be expected, support for the strikes seems to have been strongest among the locomotive men proper (L.M.S., over 98 per cent; L.N.E.R., over 99 per cent).

it is doubtful whether, had the strike continued, it could have gone on rising at anything like the same rate. In effect, the strike seems, at its peak, to have reduced both the main line railways and the London buses to (say) 1 to 5 per cent of normal. But while blacklegging on the railways brought passenger trains up to no more than 12 to 20 per cent, and goods trains to far less, the buses were restored to somewhere near 30 per cent despite the heavy demand for drivers to man food lorries.

So effective was the road haulage scheme that the plan of the Board of Trade for dividing the country into 'petrol areas' and providing special organization for the transport of petrol was not needed. Petrol barges on the Thames were manned by naval ratings, but the existing machinery was adequate to provide for its distribution. According to the *Economist*,[1] there was no petrol shortage during the General Strike, and despite increased distribution costs prices were not raised. There was no Government rationing; the petrol companies pooled their supplies and drew from each other's stocks where necessary. The Government provided guards, arranged for petrol trains, and made special contracts for the transport services (for example, for the Milk Depot in Hyde Park, the Transport Service on the Horse Guards Parade, and the Omnibus Depot in Regent's Park). All in all, petrol consumption increased by about 35 to 40 per cent. Transport drivers and other employees mostly remained 'loyal' to the petrol companies. The only shortage to make itself felt was of fuel oil, and this was because petrol had priority of movement, for there were said to be large stocks. 'It must be obvious', the *Economist* went on, 'that if the coal strike continues much longer fuel oil will come to the rescue of industry, as petrol did in the General Strike. In the coal strike of 1921 the railway companies converted a large number[2] of their locomotives from coal to oil burning, and there is no reason why they should not do the same today.' But it was not necessary.

Some Left-wing writers have been so much struck with the force of the 'new truth in political philosophy' that they have even suggested that considerations of class-war strategy have accelerated the development of road transport. Firstly, it is said, railway Trade Unionism was strong while road transport Unionism was weak, and therefore the conditions of railway workers could be undercut by road transport workers (the prospect of cheap alternative labour being sufficient to stimulate its exploitation); and, secondly, strikes gave a further impetus to road transport: 'the threat of such an action by organized labour in 1921 (Black Friday) and the actuality in 1926 drove the supporters of the existing order to foster a form of transport which is decentralized, easily improvised, whose labour is largely unorganized and which can easily be manned by "amateur" labour. The uselessness of blackleg labour in the highly specialized operations of railway transport during the railway strikes of 1919 and the General Strike of 1926 emphasized the desirability of encouraging an industry less black-

[1] May 29th, 1926.

[2] This was in fact not so. Oil firing for locomotives was tried in Britain as early as 1893, but was not extensively developed owing to the high price of oil compared with coal. During the 1912 and 1921 coal strikes there was some further conversion to oil firing, but though exact records are no longer available it is known that the conversion was not on a large scale. Any large-scale conversion involves, of course, not only alterations to locomotives and tenders, but also the installation of refuelling and storage depots. (The cost per locomotive converted, including the cost of storage installations, was put at about £1850 in 1947; see *Hansard*, No. 435, col. 1650 (March 31st, 1947).)

leg-proof than the railway and easily fitted in with the Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies.'[1] But stronger forces than this have been at work.

The striking-power of other sections of transport workers than railwaymen has been affected by road transport. Another 'key' section — the lightermen — found that changing conditions of transport worsened their position, as was proved by a strike in 1932. Goods which they refused to handle were moved by road, and the work of the port was not held up to anything like the same extent as on earlier occasions. 'After other strikes the warehouses were full, and there were months of work day and night to make up arrears. This time it was not so. As a matter of fact, we lost contracts as a result of the strike, and generally we have not got them back again.'[2]

Use of armed forces in strikes

The question of the use of armed forces in strikes, as blacklegs and/or as auxiliary police, is important here. During the bitter strikes of the early nineteenth century — particularly those of the miners and keelmen of the North-East — both military and naval forces were used freely.[3] In 1860, however, the newly-formed London Trades Council was able to secure the withdrawal of blacklegging troops during the builders' strike, and in 1872 it stopped troops being lent to the farmers during the agricultural workers' strike — and even secured the insertion of a new regulation in the Queen's Regulations of 1873, prohibiting such assistance for the future.[4] This was a remarkable achievement, for in other cases troops have continued to be used as blacklegs up to the present day (when, powers having been made available under wartime Emergency Regulations, it is becoming standard practice in serious strikes).

The policing function of troops during strikes dates, of course, from the days when no regular police force existed. Generally speaking, however, their role — blacklegging apart — during even the biggest strikes of the present century has been to make a display of force; the actual use of force has been far rarer than, for example, in the U.S.A. Soldiers have generally been held in reserve, to be called in and used if necessary at the discretion of the police: 'I have, Sir, as you are well aware, fully shared your great anxiety as to the result of any action by the military', wrote a Chief Constable to Mr. Churchill at the Home Office during the Cambrian Combine dispute of 1910-11; but 'should the worst come to the worst, they will completely save the situation in such a manner as will call for no possible censure on any one's shoulders'.[5]

In the railway strike of 1911[6] two men were shot at Llanelly — four others being killed by the firing of a truck containing explosives — and two more were

[1] *Britain Without Capitalists* (1936), p. 64 (anonymous contributors).

[2] HILTON (ed.), *Are Trade Unions Obstructive?* (1935), p. 122.

[3] HAMMOND (*The Skilled Labourer*, 1919), and ASPINALL (*The Early English Trade Unions*, 1949) quote numerous instances.

[4] See WEBB, *History of Trade Unionism* (1926 edn.), pp. 247, 333.

[5] *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales* (*Cd.* 5568, 1911), p. 41. (See also p. 288-9 of this book.)

[6] See the *Correspondence between the Home Office and Local Authorities relating to the Employment of the Military during the Railway Strike in August* 1911. Inquiries and appeals for troops came from Liverpool, Manchester and Salford, Bristol, Nottingham, Derby, Stockport, Rotherham, Sheffield, Llanelly, Hull, Cleveland, Stafford, Wrexham, Bedford, Birkenhead, Wolverhampton, Carmarthen, Crewe, Nuneaton, Lincoln, Ilkeston, Birmingham; and rioting was also reported in Chesterfield.

shot at Liverpool: in the Dublin general strike there had been, according to the T.U.C. *Report* for 1913, the loss of two lives and injuries to several hundreds of people: 'how long are we to look on', thundered a speaker at this congress, 'while in London, Liverpool, Llanelly and now in Dublin the souls of our fellow-workers are being sent to hell to please the capitalist class'.[1] (In point of fact, as came out on the occasion of Lord Haldane's report on the disturbances, the real rioters were not strikers at all.)[2] Although there have been severe clashes of strikers with police, clashes with the military have been exceptional during the present century. Displays, however, were often made before 1927: the series of 'local general strikes' at Belfast and on the Clyde in the early part of 1919, for example, evoked considerable parades of military force; but during the General Strike, although all army leave was stopped and troops were moved to Lancashire, Wales and Scotland, as well as to London, there seems to have been very little public showing of troops except in the metropolitan area. Here, however, tanks paraded to the London docks on May 8th and following days, and the road to the Ranks and Vernon mills, which had been inaccessible, was filled with a considerable number of troops, together with machine-guns, armoured cars, and artillery — all more than adequately provided with munitions.

The fraternization of strikers and police — particularly of course the local police, rather than those imported into the area — is not unknown:[3] witness the famous football match of 1926, which has regularly attracted the attention of those who see in such incidents the expression of a national character. Similarly at Tonypandy in 1911 strikers and soldiers played football together, the soldiers winning the match.[4] But a different and more purposeful type of fraternization of troops with strikers was evidenced in 1919 — when 'from a record that was made it appears that there were over a hundred football matches played between the soldiers and the strikers for the benefit of the railwaymen's funds'.[5] Despite the apprehension of some Trade Union leaders at the threat of armed force, it was said that soldiers who fraternized with strike pickets were promptly withdrawn to barracks, and that the Cabinet were warned by high military authority against attempting to use troops in strikes at all. Moreover, three ex-Service organizations (the Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers, the Comrades of the Great War, and the International Union of

[1] J. Sexton (Liverpool dockers), T.U.C. *Report*, p. 68. Ben Tillett (London dockers) proposed the release of Larkin and his comrades, and even that the workers might have to arm themselves; C. B. Stanton (M.F.G.B.) proposed a 1- or 2-day general strike in protest; A. E. Chandler (R.C.A.) made the more modest suggestion, 'as a demonstration against this butchery of workers' that the T.U.C. delegates should refuse to attend the civic reception arranged for the same evening; but good manners prevailed.

[2] See *The Times* (August 23rd, 1911). The point that rioting during strikes was usually not the work of strikers was again made in 1931, when a proposal was made to add a clause to the Army Act precluding troops from aiding the civil power in trade disputes either by blacklegging or otherwise, unless a State of Emergency had been proclaimed. The Secretary of State for War, in rejecting the proposal, stated that 'there was generally an element of the population which had little or nothing to do with the strikers . . . that caused most of the damage' (*The Times*, April 2nd, 1931).

[3] See Horrabin, Postgate and Wilkinson, *A Worker's History of the Great Strike* (1927), p. 59. In Brighton, bus drivers employed by Tillings actually presented the Chief Constable with a silver salver after the strike was over.

[4] Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield*, 1910-11, p. 80.

[5] J. H. Thomas, in introduction to Alcock, *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism* (1922), p. xiii.

Ex-Service Men) apparently refused co-operation with the Government.[1] Certainly the War Office Circular of 1919 (the 'secret military circular', a copy of which was stolen and appeared in full in the *Daily Herald* of May 13th) showed a marked reluctance to make use of troops: at the end of January, when the circular was drafted, 'we had', said Mr. Churchill,[2] 'a considerable number of mutinies in the Army, one at least of a very serious character'; there were many strikes and threats of strikes; and there had been serious rioting in Glasgow. The circular cautiously inquired how many soldiers were Union members, and how far they could be relied on during strikes; it sought information on the opinions of the men, and called for weekly reports. These reports were not altogether reassuring: for while, said Mr. Churchill,

> 'Troops may be relied on to assist the civil power to preserve the public peace. They resent unofficial strikes and the effort of a section of the community to intimidate the Government, and they realise their duties as citizens to repress disorderly persons,'

yet

> 'All the reports deprecate the employment of troops in strike breaking, and it would not be fair to ask troops to do what they consider to be blackleg work.'

Of course there was no question of using troops in anything but big strikes which involved the Government's prestige: 'we said in the House of Commons', said Mr. Bonar Law,[3] '— we had to — that in the event of a real conflict between the Government and a great power in the Trade Unions, we must use all the forces of the State to put it down. There never was any intention in our minds of using soldiers in ordinary conflicts between Capital and Labour.' The very term 'strike breaking', Mr. Churchill[4] explained, was a misnomer since it 'was bound to give offence, and moreover it was not what the military authorities meant':

> 'To use soldiers or sailors, kept up at the expense of the taxpayer, in an ordinary trade dispute, to employ them as what are called blacklegs, would be a monstrous invasion of the liberty of the subject . . . But the case is different where vital services affecting the health, life and safety of large cities or great concentrations of people are concerned . . . Light, water, electric power, transport, the distribution of food, all these are indispensable to the existence of these mighty cities which cover our land. If any of these commodities or facilities are suddenly cut off, the State must intervene and come to the rescue of the population whose lives are in danger, by every means in its power, including the use of military and naval forces, so as to avoid a general catastrophe.'

A special case arose, however, with the formation of the Army Supplementary Reserve (Transportation Branch), authorized in 1924 under the first Labour

[1] See Glasgow and District Railwaymen's *Strike Bulletin*, No. 2 (September 29th, 1919).
[2] Reported in *The Times* (May 30th, 1919).
[3] Interview with the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. on the question of the 1919 (Southport) Conference decisions. See Gould, *The Coming Revolution* (1920), pp. 261-2.
[4] *The Times* (May 30th, 1919).

Government. This was considered by the Unions to be a menacing step; it can be thought of as half-way between the use of troops to break strikes and, for example, the French Government's action in 1940 of calling up strikers into the forces and then treating their strike, if it continued, as desertion (a method threatened, but not used, by President Truman in the U.S.A. in 1946). It was pleaded, to allay the prevalent suspicions, that the liability of the reserve to be called out to help the civil power would not be insisted on; but, as the *Manchester Guardian* put it, 'the distinction between organizing essential services and strike-breaking is not so clear to Trade Unionists as to the rest of us'. A showdown was precipitated by the action of dockers' employers, railway companies and the London General Omnibus Company in January 1925 in circularizing their employees with an invitation to join the reserve.[1] Strong opposition developed in the railway and transport Unions, and when the Government did not give the desired guarantee that the reserve would not be used for strike-breaking, the N.U.R., A.S.L.E. & F., and T. & G.W.U., with T.U.C. support, officially warned Trade Union members not to enlist, despite the extra holidays and other concessions which were offered as inducements. In addition, the Communist-inspired Minority Movement was agitating for the 'right of soldiers and naval ratings to refuse strike services'.[2]

In fact, despite the formation of the reserve, and although there had been proposals (e.g. in 1925) to substitute military personnel for craftsmen in Government depots, soldiers were not extensively used in 1926 to run blackleg services, still less for violent purposes. The Navy, however, manned power stations, docks, and cold storage plants, maintained the mail service across the Irish Channel, protected and distributed petrol supplies, carried about 250 tons of yeast daily to various ports, and provided war vessels of various types at strategic points in harbours and canals to support the authorities and for special duties.[3] The National Association of Army and Navy Pensioners were also recommended by their Executive to give every assistance they could. Mr. Bevin, at a T.U.C. Conference of Executives in 1927, referred to 'grave disaffection' in the Army and Navy during the General Strike; but there seems little other evidence for this.[4]

On two famous occasions workers have been prosecuted for issuing printed propaganda appealing to the troops not to shoot down strikers. In 1912, Fred Crowsley (a railwayman), Guy Bowman, B. E. and C. E. Buck (the printers), and Tom Mann were given sentences of up to nine months' imprisonment for circulating a leaflet in the following terms:

> 'You are Workingmen's Sons.
> 'When We go on strike to better Our lot which is the lot also of Your Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters, *You* are called upon by your Officers to *Murder Us*.

[1] The arrangement between the War Office and the railway companies provided for the nomination of commanding officers, and the selection of men to be directed to go to recruiting offices, by the railway general managers.

[2] Arnot, *The General Strike* (1926), p. 115.

[3] For instance, four submarines were dispatched to the King George V Dock to supply electric power.

[4] See *The Times* (April 30th, 1927).

'Don't Do it. . . .

'Don't you know that when you are out of the colours, and become a "Civvy" again, that You, like Us, may be on strike, and You, like Us, be liable to be Murdered by other soldiers.

'Boys, Don't Do it.
"Thou shalt not kill", says the Book.

'Don't forget that!

'It does not say, "unless you have a uniform on".

'No! *Murder is Murder*. . . .

'Think things out and refuse any longer to Murder Your Kindred. Help Us to win back Britain for the British and the World for the Workers.'

The text of the leaflet was said to have been written by Fred Bowers, a Liverpool building worker, and to have been reprinted from James Connolly's *Irish Worker*. One account suggests that Tom Mann may not have been connected with the issue of the leaflet; but he was charged when he publicly associated himself with it.[1] The inclusion of the printers, however, was, in Cole's words,[2] 'a peculiar piece of malice'; and, although the leaflet was a telling one, the prosecution stood out in ironical contrast to the immunity of the Conservatives who at this time were openly exhorting officers to ignore their oaths and their duty in Ireland.

The second occasion was in 1924, when J. R. Campbell, editor of the Communist *Workers' Weekly*, was prosecuted for certain 'Don't Shoot' articles which were printed on July 25th, and August 1st, as part of a general anti-war campaign timed to coincide with Labour peace demonstrations. Special efforts were made to get the articles to the troops. Apart from some disparaging observations on loyalty to God and the King, and 'capitalists' armies' in general as contrasted with 'workers' armies', the general line of the articles was to dissuade troops from shooting down strikers. The *Workers' Weekly* for August 1st had a special supplement with banner headlines appealing to the troops to disobey orders; but earlier issues had gone beyond mere negative exhortation and breathed civil war:

'Soldiers, sailors, airmen, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, the Communist Party calls on you to begin the task of not only organizing passive resistance when war is declared, or when an industrial dispute involves you, but to definitely and categorically let it be known that, neither in the class war nor a military war, will you turn your guns on your fellow workers, but instead will line up with your fellow workers in an attack upon the exploiters and capitalists, and will use your arms on the side of your own class.

'Form committees in every barracks, aerodrome and ship.[3] Let this be the nucleus of an organization that will prepare the whole of the soldiers, sailors

[1] DONA TORR, *Tom Mann* (1936), p. 43.
[2] *The Common People*, 1746-1938 (1938), p. 440.
[3] *The Times* (April 8th, 1929) noted a subdued recrudescence of this propaganda in the form of a 'very mild' leaflet addressed to the Forces, and distributed by a few men dressed in Russian military uniform. 'Its only departure from political convention' was the recommendation to organize.

and airmen, not merely to refuse to go to war, or to refuse to shoot strikers during industrial conflicts, but will make it possible . . . to go forward in a common attack upon the capitalists, and smash capitalism for ever, and institute the reign of the whole working class.

'Refuse to shoot down your fellow workers.

'Refuse to fight for profits.

'Turn your weapons on your oppressors.'

However, there seems to have been a considerable outcry against the prosecution, and it was dropped. The defence professed itself eager to transform the trial into yet another anti-war demonstration: they proposed to bring members of the Government into the witness-box in order to examine them concerning their pronouncements against war; they maintained that such 'material was found in the speeches of almost every prominent Minister except Mr. MacDonald', whose speeches were too ambiguous to quote.[1] The prosecution, however, refused to be drawn; and the *Workers' Weekly* reported on August 15th, that the line taken had been that 'the intention of the Open Letter to the Forces could not be construed as a specific attempt, maliciously and advisedly, to seduce members from their allegiance, but was comment on the use of armed military force by the State for the suppression of industrial disputes,[2] and this, according to the summing-up of Mr. Justice Horridge in the case of Bowman and others at the Central Criminal Court, constituted a valid defence'. The whole affair, together with an apparent *volte-face* in Anglo-Soviet relations which resulted from the Foreign Office's unquestioning acceptance of the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter, contributed to the demise of the 1924 Labour Government.

The question of using troops in strikes has cropped up once or twice since, but *diminuendo*: the I.L.P., for example, proposed an amendment to the Incitement to Disaffection Bill in 1934 providing that it should be legal to speak or write advising the armed forces not to allow themselves to be used in strikes; but it is symptomatic of the changed conditions that the use of troops in strikes in recent years has passed almost without comment, and wholly without resistance.

Strike-breaking by Trade Unions

The Syndicalists, of course, regarded the mere failure to organize immediate sympathetic strikes as Trade Union strike-breaking, and their literature is correspondingly full of denunciation. Even if a narrower definition is adopted, however, and if one also excludes Trade Union action against unofficial strikes of their own members, strike-breaking by Trade Unions is not wholly unknown; although

[1] J. R. CAMPBELL, *The Campbell Case, Labour Monthly,* November 1924.

[2] An obsessional sensitiveness to the possibility of using armed forces against strikers was evidenced by the *Sunday Worker* two years later (July 4th, 1926), when further streaming headlines greeted the innocent appearance of the Cierva Autogiro at an air display:

'Air Death Menace to Workers
'Royal Idlers Watch Murder Planes
'New Machines Suited for Bombing Strikers' Demonstrations
'Death Dealers on Show
'Children Specially Invited to See How their Fathers can be Mown Down.'

it is far less common than in the United States.[1] Marquand notes that in the competition for membership during the 1920s 'in extreme instances bribery and even strike-breaking were resorted to' by some Unions;[2] and the 'Main Principle No. 4' agreed to at the Hull Congress of 1924 suggests that what it condemns sometimes occurs:

> 'Under no circumstances should a Union accept members from another Union which is engaged in a trade dispute. It should be a general understanding that both national and local officials of Trade Unions should refrain from speaking or acting adversely to the interests of any other Union during any period in which the members of the latter Union are in dispute. . . .'

This clause had to be re-emphasized at the 1939 Congress;[3] and in the interval certain cases of alleged Trade Union strike-breaking had come to the notice of the T.U.C.[4] One or two examples can also be cited of action being taken by powerful Unions against strikes organized by Unions with a smaller and sectional following.

Other forms of pressure on strikers

It is impossible to list the many indirect pressures which may have been brought to bear on strikers. Whereas in the 1889 dock strike 'the organization of relief was simplified by the considerate action of landlords and tradespeople', and 'very few evictions took place amongst the dock population while the strike was in progress', while 'gifts of tea, milk, bread, soup and other provisions were freely sent . . . by the East End shop-keepers',[5] strikers' experience has often been very different, for shopkeepers have often refused credit to men on strike.

Again, Poor Law Relief has sometimes been withheld in strikes. By a decision given in 1900 in the Court of Appeal, when the Attorney-General conducted a case against the Merthyr Tydfil Guardians, 'able-bodied men who can, if they choose, obtain work which will enable them to maintain themselves, their wives, and families, but who, by reason of a strike or otherwise, refuse to accept that work, are not entitled to relief'. This case was recalled in 1922, when during the engineering dispute the Manchester District Engineering Trades Employers' Association suggested that if Boards of Guardians were to act contrary to the decision of 1900, the Association should watch the situation carefully, and 'an arrangement should be made for a number of ratepayers intimating to the board that they object to the course which they are taking'.[6]

While, however, relief was not payable to the strikers themselves, it has been paid to the families of men on strike. Cases have been known, nevertheless, where Boards of Guardians have refused to pay relief even in respect of strikers' families — the Poplar Guardians so refused, for example, in a dockers' strike of

[1] In the U.S.A. Trade Union strike-breaking, at any rate of inconvenient unofficial strikes, would seem to be common; HILLER (*The Strike* (1928), p. 75) offers six neatly classified ways of doing it.

[2] *Organised Labour in Four Continents* (1938), p. 75.

[3] See 1939 T.U.C. *Report*, p. 106.

[4] See 1936 T.U.C. *Report*, pp. 91, 92.

[5] LLEWELLYN SMITH and NASH, *The Story of the Dockers' Strike* (1889), p. 97.

[6] See A.E.U. *Monthly Journal* (June 1922).

1923.[1] In the 1926 coal strike, according to *Labour Monthly*,[2] it was pressure of this kind from 'Conservative Boards of Guardians' and 'reactionary shopkeepers' which caused the first breach in the miners' ranks. Poor Law Relief, points out one writer,[3] is generally given on loan, and the debts from the 1921 miners' lockout were not yet repaid in 1926: 'in some cases Poor Law Relief is reduced when the Miners' Federation has given any sum, however small, although the relief is given only for the mother and children and not for the men. In no case is it sufficient for the needs of the children.' (It amounted at this time to about 3d. per head per day.) Twenty-four Boards of Guardians stopped the payment of relief to strikers' families altogether: 'What was the object of this treatment? Was it to give the miner and his dependants such a sickener at the outset that the woman, rather than undergo such treatment, would compel her man to go to work?' A deliberate policy of pressure on the strikers' children, moreover, was attributed to the N.S.P.C.C., and to certain education authorities, by this writer; another mentions the attempted exclusion of strikers' children from the West Hendon crèche during the General Strike.[4] Before 1914 a permanent body — the League of the Strikers' Children — had existed in London; but it collapsed during the war. Since 1926, however, big strikes have rarely dragged out long enough for such methods to have been in evidence.

[1] See T. & G.W.U. *Record* (July 1924).
[2] December 1926, p. 729.
[3] PHILLIPS, *Women and the Miners' Lock-Out* (1927), pp. 57-63.
[4] HORRABIN, POSTGATE and WILKINSON, *A Worker's History of the Great Strike* (1927), p. 58.

PART B: CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF STRIKES

CHAPTER IV

CONDITIONS AND CAUSES OF STRIKE ACTIVITY

IN the second part of this study we shall examine the strike movement in detail, with a view to assessing the long- and short-term causes, and later the effects of strikes.[1] For this purpose we shall use the official strike statistics.[2] It must be admitted at the outset that strike statistics are more subject than most to difficulties of interpretation, and there are many pitfalls for the unwary; but while some of these difficulties will be noted as they arise, most of them are reserved to the main statistical appendix.

The period selected is 1911 to 1947.[3] These thirty-seven years have included two periods of intensive war preparation, two world wars, and two periods of reconstruction, as well as a long inter-war depression which left a deep mark on industrial relations; and the period covers the greater part of the working life of the oldest workers in industry today.

So far we have described the background of strikes in this country, and have examined the organizational and institutional developments which have helped to lessen their severity. But many other things, particularly economic events, may contribute to a decline in the severity of strikes; rising real wages, for example, may reduce the causes of dispute; heavy unemployment may make strikes seem more risky; boom conditions may make employers ready to concede to the *threat* of a strike, and so on. Indeed, in industrial as in international affairs, the establishment of negotiating machinery is no guarantee against warfare, for whether the machinery is used or not depends largely on how far rival interests are in fact compatible, as well as on the capacity of both sides to fight. We must therefore start by asking what relation exists between strike fluctuations and economic fluctuations generally, and what are the limits to an economic interpretation of strike movements.

Section 1: General economic and non-economic influences

A number of studies have been made, particularly in the United States, of strike fluctuations as a reflection of economic conditions. It has been argued, for instance, that

> 'strikes reflect fairly accurately the growth of population and the increased numbers of gainfully employed or of industrial wage-earners in the nation. Again, various relationships between business activity, the alternate periods of expansion and contraction in the trade cycle, and numbers of industrial

[1] For the sake of simplicity, because of the difficulty of distinguishing between strikes and lockouts, and because lockouts are so few in any case, the word 'strike' will be used henceforward as synonymous with 'industrial dispute'. See pp. 299-300.

[2] i.e. the figures published in the *Labour Gazette* by the Board of Trade (and since 1919 by the Ministry of Labour). The *Gazette*, or the *Abstract of Labour Statistics*, is therefore the source for all tables and graphs unless it is otherwise stated.

[3] For some purposes the period chosen ends in June 1945, with the close of the second world war in Europe.

> disputes and of workers involved in them have been described. Similarly, current manifestations of industrial unrest are said to reflect the movements of wholesale or of retail prices, cost of living, and real wages; and these more or less interrelated conditions are regarded as exerting significant influences on industrial unrest.'[1]

It can be shown for all countries for which statistics exist that strikes are somewhat sensitive to the trade cycle — indeed, it would be surprising if this were not so. 'Commercial buoyancy must of necessity produce Trade Union activity,' said the President of the T.U.C. in 1913: 'A demand or a strike without a turnover above the normal would be out of season, just as a lockout would be to enforce a general reduction of wages when orders were very plentiful.'

The American studies mentioned use very different series of figures to illustrate the correspondence in the two sets of fluctuations. One writer, for example, relates the number of strikes to the money national income;[2] another connects the number of workers directly involved in strikes with the fluctuations of wholesale prices (workers directly involved correlating with wholesale prices positively when prices are rising and workers tend to strike for wage increases, and negatively when prices are falling and workers are concerned to prevent wage-cuts);[3] another finds a relation between the number of strikes and the wholesale price index;[4] and so on, in great variety.

The choice of particular series — on the one side, wholesale prices, money national income, cost of living, wage rates, etc., and on the other, number of strikes, number of workers involved (directly or altogether), etc. — is more or less arbitrary: in Griffin's words,[5] 'any fluctuating phenomenon moves within a mass of more or less related phenomena, all of which act or interact upon one another. In this sense, every series of economic statistics may be said to be dependent upon every other and the movement in one to be unintelligible without examination of movements in the others'. This is somewhat evident.

What precludes, of course, a more precise analysis of variables such as has been applied to price movements, is the great influence of 'imponderables' which cannot be reduced to quantitative terms — for instance, the political atmosphere; the quality, outlook, and influence of Trade Union and other leaders of labour; and the general state of mind of employers and workers. In the United Kingdom, 'imponderables' have probably played a bigger part than, for example, in the United States, and therefore British strike fluctuations are less well 'explained' by trade cycle movements. In the United States, over the periods covered by most of the studies, more of the classic conditions of capitalist expansion were present than in the United Kingdom from 1911 to 1947. Consequently in the United States general economic fluctuations, including strike fluctuations, were more spontaneous and less subject to checks and controls of various kinds. Again, between 1911 and 1947 the United Kingdom endured two world wars at close range, as well as a General Strike, and at these times

[1] YODER, *Journal of Political Economy* (April 1940), p. 222f.

[2] GOMBERG, *Strikes and Lock-Outs in Great Britain, Quarterly Journal of Economics* (November 1944), p. 92f.

[3] HANSEN, *Cycles of Strikes, American Economic Review* (December 1921).

[4] GRIFFIN, *Strikes: A Study in Quantitative Economics* (New York, 1939).

[5] GRIFFIN, op. cit., p. 57.

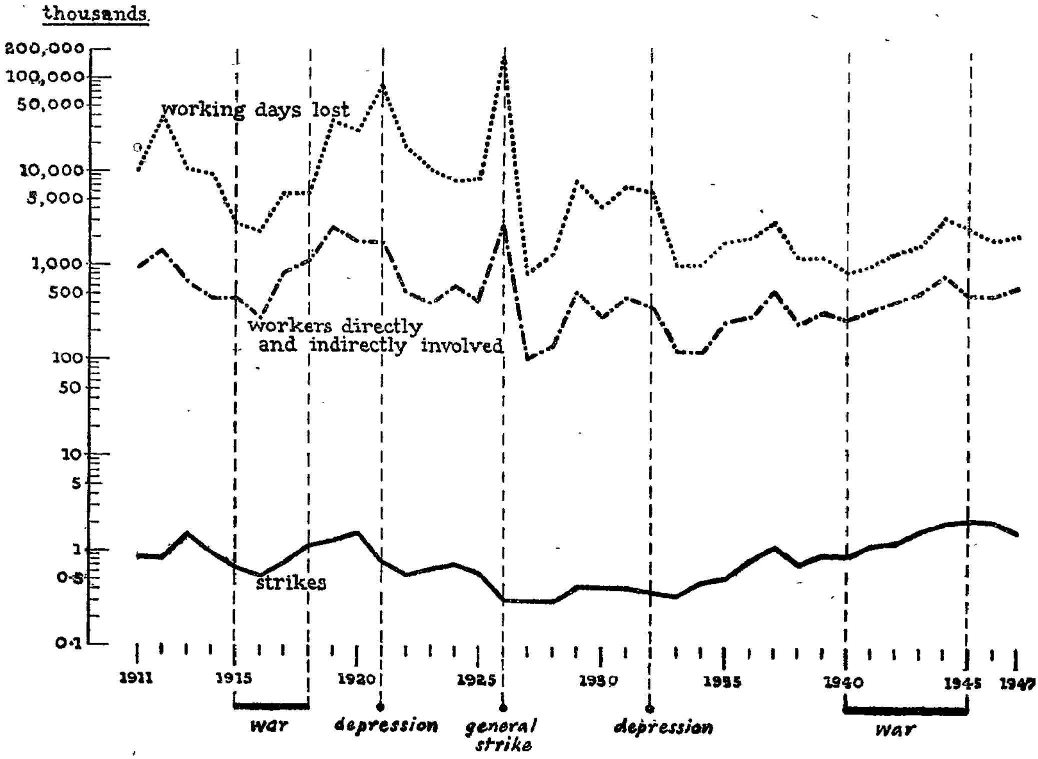
there were powerful political determinants of strikes. Moreover, the fuller development here of joint industrial machinery and of labour legislation, while not wholly independent of economic events, has imposed new patterns on the strike movement and has somewhat insulated it from determination by the trade cycle. The reciprocal effect of strikes on the course of the trade cycle is discussed elsewhere;[1] here, it may be ignored.

Strikes and the trade cycle

(a) *Interpretation of different series of strike statistics*

Existing studies have usually selected one or other of the three basic series of strike statistics as a measure of unrest: the number of strikes, as indicating the prevalence of separate outbreaks of discontent; the number of workers involved, as showing the extent of militancy; or the number of working days lost, as revealing, in addition, something of the stubbornness of the parties.[2] But although these series are interconnected, they move somewhat differently (Graph 4).

Strikes, workers involved, and working days lost [a)]



GRAPH 4

a] All series relate to strikes *beginning* in years in question (see table on p. 310).

[1] See pp. 264-5. The reciprocal effect has probably—with the obvious exceptions—been negligible. Nor, for example, have the unemployment figures been statistically inflated by the inclusion of strikers as unemployed: see appendix to this section.

[2] Working days lost are also commonly taken as an indication of 'lost' production — a kind of annual assessment of war damage. See pp. 266-9.

As might perhaps be expected, it is the number of strikes[1] which seems to be the most sensitive to trade cycle fluctuations in the period. This is presumably because this series is least subject to the 'imponderable' influences mentioned. The number of workers involved is determined by Trade Union tactical attitudes more than is the number of strikes,[2] while the number of working days lost (i.e. number of workers involved × duration of strike in working days, for all strikes during the year) tends to be more haphazard still, since it also reflects the power and will of both sides to hold out.

It may be noted that the number of strikes seems to be the most sensitive to cyclical fluctuations not only in the United Kingdom, but in all countries for which strike statistics are readily available: 'among the five series',[3] wrote Dr. K. Forchheimer, 'only *frequency*' (i.e. the number of strikes) 'follows fairly distinctly the cyclical pattern. This reaction is strongest in Great Britain, Germany and Canada, but there is a trace of it in the graphs for all countries. This makes for a kind of international agreement in the short run changes of the frequency of disputes . . . There are still some traces of the cyclical pattern in the numbers of *workers involved* . . . But even this last trace of any regular reaction on cyclical movements has gone in the numbers of *days lost*; there is no international agreement and (apart from the big strike wave)[4] the peaks look entirely erratic.' (Similarly the Balfour Committee, in discussing British strike statistics, remarked that the working days annually lost through strikes varied very widely 'and according to no ascertainable law of fluctuation'.[5])

(b) *Interpretation of different series of economic statistics*

Since strikes are influenced by many non-economic factors, one would not expect a close correspondence between strikes and any single economic series. Nevertheless since economic conditions do clearly influence strikes to some extent, it might be asked which of the series commonly chosen for such comparison — for example, indices of production, prices, wages, trade, employment and so on — is likely to indicate the strongest influence (Graph 5).

One might select a general index of industrial production or business activity, or, failing these, particular output or trade figures.[6] Increased production may, indirectly, mean more strikes, because of the conditions implied: greater intensity of work and risk of accidents, rising prices, exceptional profits, and a stronger bargaining position due to fuller employment.

[1] This is so despite the fact that strikes vary so much in size, and despite the occasional difficulty of defining a single strike. See p. 302.

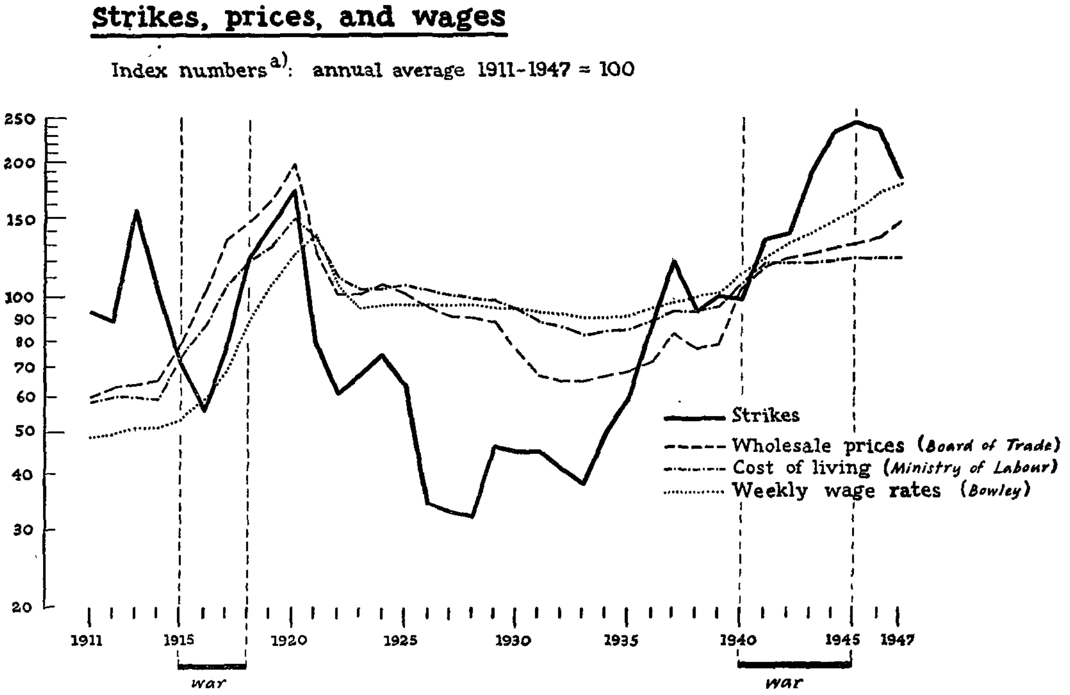
[2] The number of workers involved is also of course affected by the structure of the industries where the strikes take place; size of firms, occupational distribution of workers, etc. Again, where strikes take place concerning particular agreements, the number of workers involved will depend on the scope, adequacy, etc., of such agreements.

[3] Forchheimer was also considering two further series — the average size and average length of strikes. He compared the fluctuations of strikes in the U.K., France, Germany, Sweden, Canada and the U.S.A. from 1893 to 1943. See *Some International Aspects of the Strike Movement, Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* (January 1948), pp. 16-17.

[4] Following the first world war.

[5] *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), p. 39.

[6] For example, an index of steel output, since steel is needed by almost all industries, and technical development has remained fairly stable over a long period; or, again, a measure of the volume of exports might seem worth considering — particularly since the U.K. economy is so export-sensitive.



GRAPH 5

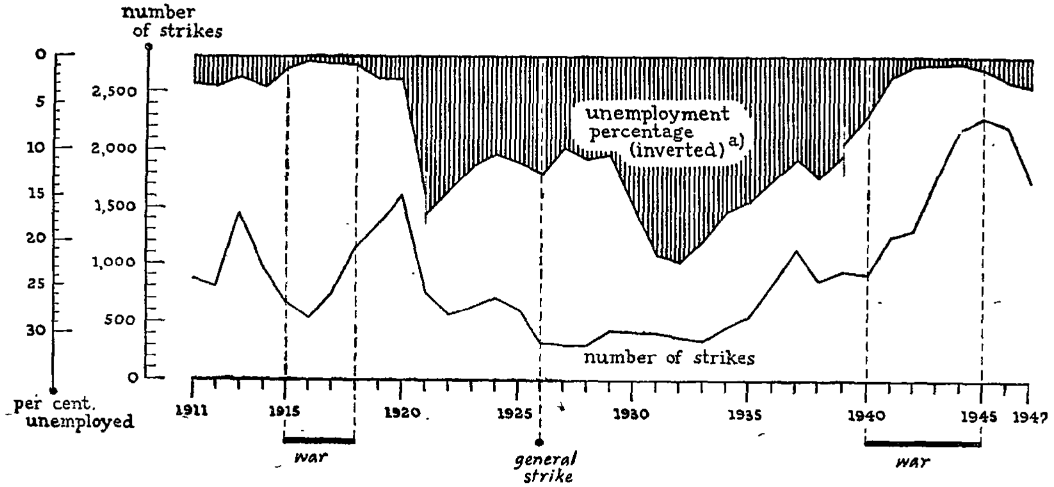
a] i.e. the averages, over the whole period, of the index numbers of prices, cost of living, and wage rates, and the average of the yearly numbers of strikes, are equated to 100. Source: *London and Cambridge Economic Service Bulletin IV*, vol. XXVI (November 18th, 1948); LAYTON and CROWTHER, *The Study of Prices* (1935); *Abstracts of Labour Statistics.*

Alternatively a price index might be preferred, for 'the price movement is the cycle itself'.[1] Here the connexion with the worker's life is more direct. A wholesale price index, while it may not be a very good reflection of home production,[2] is one of the determinants of retail prices, which in their turn determine the worker's real wage. A reliable retail-price or cost-of-living index, if one existed, would be a more direct indication of economic pressure on the worker's life; in so far as workers live on narrow margins they might be expected to resist sharp rises in the cost of living by striking. It is true that the meagre evidence which is available does not show that they do so to any significant extent;[3] moreover, where workers' wages are tied to the cost-of-living index, wage changes may take place without the 'need' to strike for increases.

Again, one might seek an adequate index of wages or earnings. The problem of interpreting the relation of wage- and strike-fluctuations is, however, particularly difficult. Wage-strikes alone — apart from many strikes on other issues which may be concealed wage-strikes — have formed a large proportion of all strikes, but they are not necessarily caused by low real wages (i.e. by a low level of wages relative to prices). It may be that wages seem low relative to other workers' wages, or to employers' profits, or to taxes, or to the absence of 'net advantages', or to wage levels judged by any combination of such criteria — or even simply to bargaining power.

[1] GRIFFIN, *Strikes* (1939), p. 62.
[2] The wholesale price index is a poor indication in this respect for the U.K., since it so largely reflects the price of imports.
[3] See pp. 222-3, 226-8.

Strikes and unemployment (all industries)



GRAPH 6

a] 1911 to 1921: Trade Union members. 1921 to 1939: insured workers. 1939 to 1947: insured workers (new regulations).

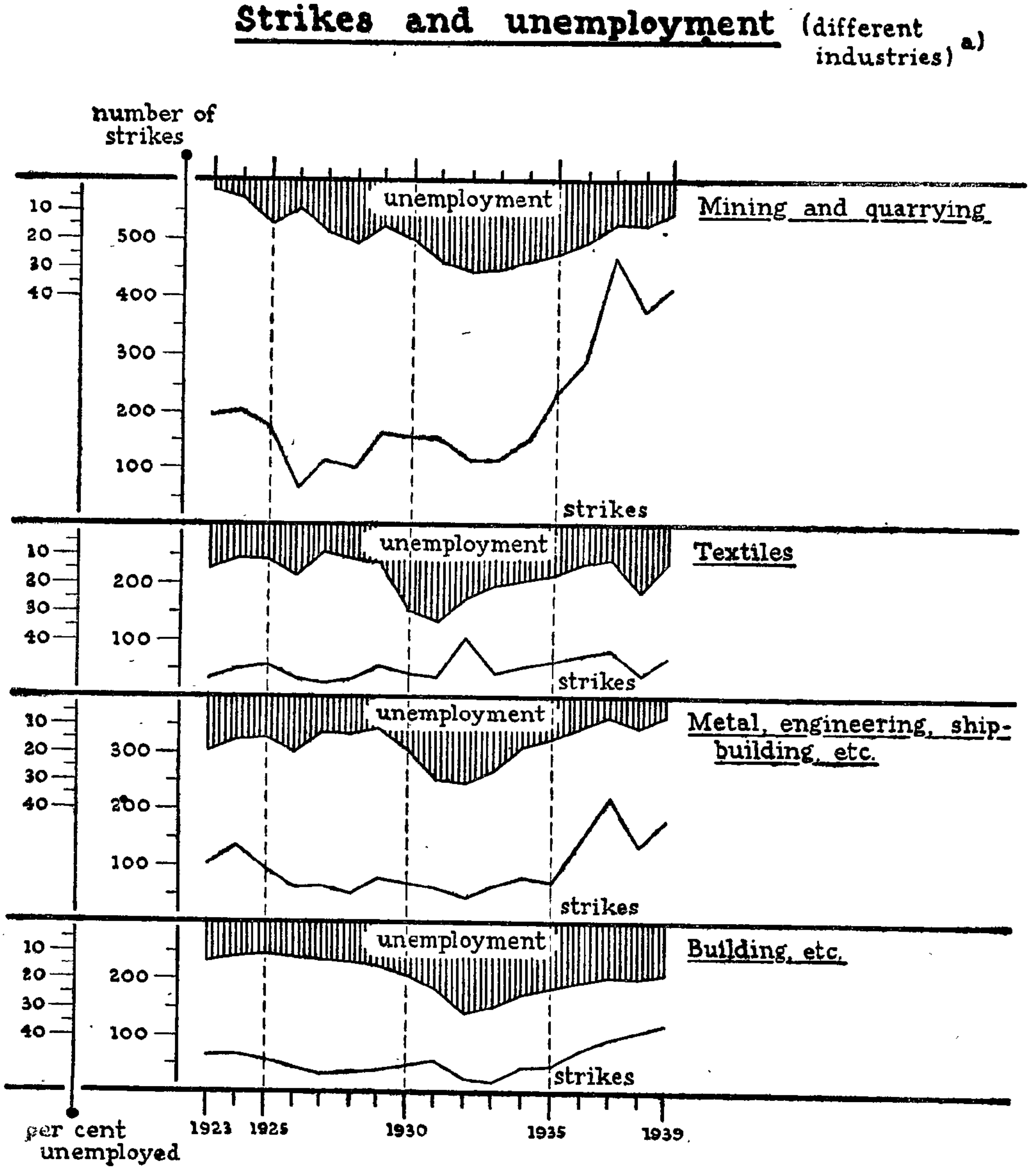
In the United Kingdom during most of the period, the level of employment has probably had the most bearing on the worker's life. A high level of employment presumably improves the prospect of striking and thus acts as a permissive 'cause' (Graphs 6 and 7).

In a period of unexampled depression in the country's main industries, bracketed by two war periods in which the whole economy was abruptly warped, there have been reasons enough for dissatisfaction — not least of which was the underlying fear, even in 'good' years, of renewed unemployment later. Under such conditions the economic determinants of strikes are likely to have been mainly negative: when other methods failed, workers struck when they felt they could, and were deterred mainly by the fear of unemployment.[1] Unemployment is not of course always the main economic determinant of strikes, but over most of the period it would not be surprising if it has been the most compelling. For a considerable time, as Professor Sargant Florence remarked,[2] 'unemployment did not enter into the calculations of English working people, but at the present moment [1924] realization of the insecurity of their "tenure of office" is one of the chief ingredients of unrest'. This probably remained true throughout the inter-war years.

It is at present impossible to go far beyond *a priori* generalization, and there is little value in measuring the relative degrees of correspondence between the incidence of strikes and the different economic series mentioned. Apart from the minor difficulty that the different economic indices are by no means equally precise, no one can say how far the 'imponderables' affect workers' reactions at different times to the various conditions which the indices describe.

[1] This has probably been true of the general run of strikes (i.e. of *small* strikes). Hare has pointed out (*Industrial Relations in New Zealand* (1946), p. 253) that in his country the fear of unemployment has been 'the main factor in preventing minor strikes, the number of which varies directly with the state of employment'.

[2] *Economics of Fatigue and Unrest* (1924), p. 379.



GRAPH 7

a] For each industry, a yearly average was calculated from the monthly returns of unemployed, and taken as a percentage of the corresponding figure of insured workers in the July number of the *Ministry of Labour Gazette.*

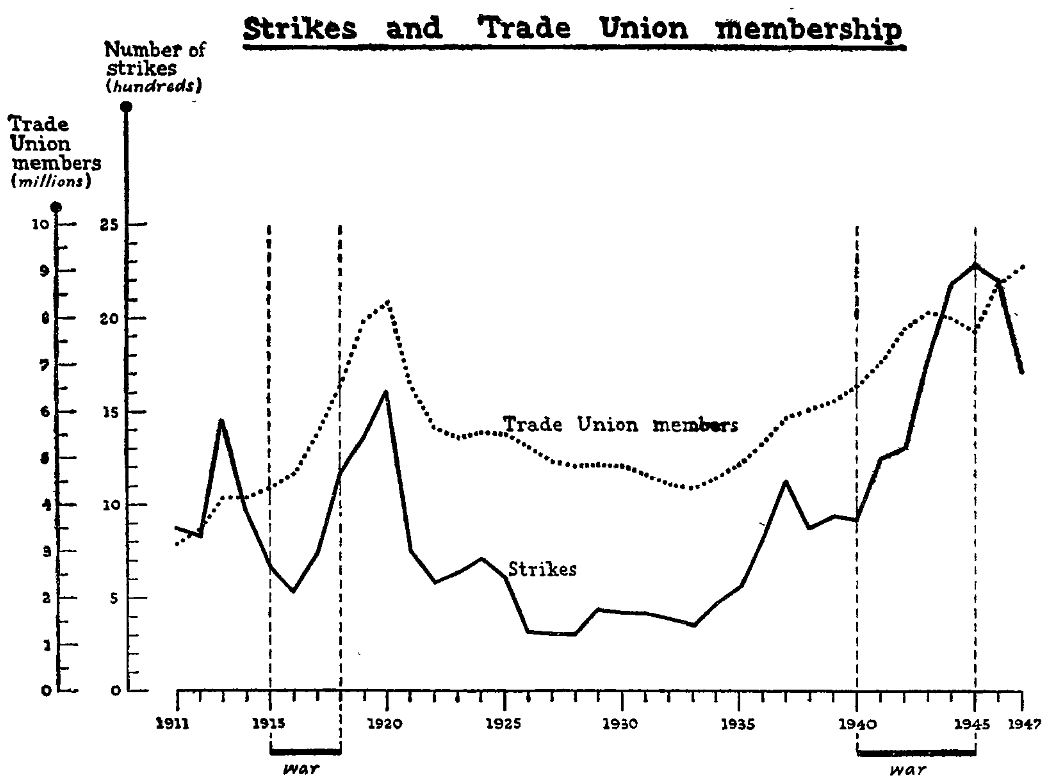
We must, however, note two further factors which, although they are themselves affected by economic influences, may exert an independent effect on strikes: the level of Trade Union membership, and the 'momentum' of strike movements.

Strikes and Trade Union membership

It has obviously been true from early times that more strikers are Trade Union members than not. Originally, the power to strike was a main object of forming a Union at all; at all times, big strikes can hardly take place without Trade Unions. Moreover, Union membership gives workers a sense of cohesion and self-

confidence, and for this reason also organized workers are readier to take strike action than unorganized.

There is, however, no marked correspondence between the numbers of Union members and of workers involved in strikes. The numbers of Union members correspond better with the number of strikes, and this probably reveals little more than that the influences associated with the trade cycle affect both sets of fluctuations (Graph 8).



Graph 8

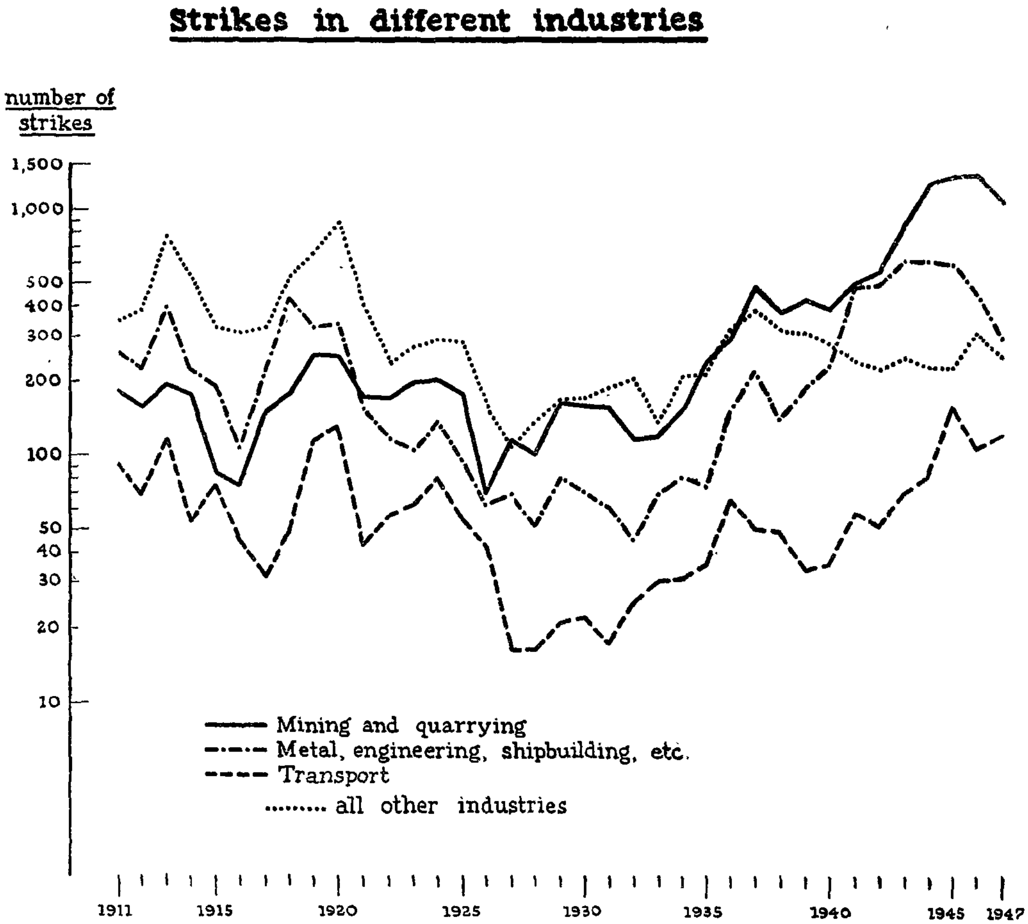
In recent experience one could hardly hope to trace a closer connexion between Union membership and strikes. The Trade Union leadership has seldom initiated strikes as it has in the United States[1] and although in the early part of the period strikes were being organized and controlled by the Unions 'in the great majority of cases',[2] it was seldom the Union Executive that took the initiative. Since 1926, and particularly of course since 1945, the leadership has been more active in preventing, restricting and curtailing strikes than in encouraging them, and has tended increasingly to assert that they were clumsy, outmoded and unnecessary even in the last resort. All this does not, however, gainsay the fact that it is the organized rather than the unorganized workers who strike.

[1] Attempts have been made in the United States to measure the extent to which Trade Unions have 'fomented' strikes. Griffin, for example (op. cit., ch. x), uses for this purpose a formula of P. H. Douglas, which is similar to that used in the present study (pp. 195-209) for measuring the relative 'strike-proneness' of workers in different regions and industries. But the method is not applicable here.

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edn., 1910-11), vol. XXV, pp. 1026-7. Various rules enabling Unions to direct or compel men to strike have been held to be illegal at Common Law.

The momentum of strike movements

The correspondence between the incidence of strikes in different industries can be seen from Graph 9. This correspondence is due not only to the fact that economic and political changes tend to affect all industries together, but also to a certain 'momentum' which develops when workers come out on strike in a major industry. Strikes tend to be contagious, especially if established wage differentials are altered.



GRAPH 9

It is, of course, impossible to isolate the effect of this 'momentum', but the correlation coefficients given on p. 152 afford a measure of the extent to which the strike-experience of each group of industries accords with that of the others.

Interplay of influences

While, as has been said, it is the number of strikes which is the most sensitive to economic influences, there is obviously more in strikes than a mere count of separate outbreaks would show, just as there is more in military history than a chronological list of battles. The numbers of workers involved and days lost, while less sensitive to economic fluctuations, should illustrate the operation of some of the 'imponde rables'. Here the question of presentation becomes important

Some writers have attempted a composite presentation of more than one of the main series of strike statistics, because each series contains something that the others lack. Cole,[1] for example, has given a 'strike index' in which the number of workers involved and the number of working days lost are included; J. V. Spielmans[2] has drawn 'strike profiles' intended to convey 'a more distinct, because more integrated, picture of the strike phenomenon' — the 'profiles' consisting of rectangles whose sides are proportionate to 'mean idleness' (i.e. the average duration of strikes) and to the number of workers involved respectively, so that the area of the rectangle represents the number of working days lost.

Cole's index, however, involves — albeit designedly — a double weighting by workers involved,[3] and takes no account of the number of strikes. Spielmans, although his form of presentation has some advantages, takes no account of the number of strikes either, and is inclined to make a virtue of necessity — on the ground that the number of strikes is 'not a significant datum in the same sense as are the number of workers involved and the man-days idle, because of the widely varying magnitude of the unit "strike" '. In fact, the number of strikes is, as we have seen, by no means without 'significance'; and Spielmans himself is eventually impelled to write the number of strikes in the corner of his rectangles, or else to draw vertical lines inside the rectangles in proportion to this number.[4]

The danger of any form of composite presentation is that, even if it is not positively confusing, it shows little more than would a reading of the separate tables. If such a presentation is to be justified, it should use all information possible, break it up into components that make sense in other contexts, and reveal the relative importance of these components as contributing to the whole. In the circumstances it would seem most satisfactory, adapting a suggestion of Forchheimer,[5] to think of the total of working days lost — the measure of total damage, so to speak — as built up of three elements: the number of strikes × the

[1] *The Common People*, 1746-1938 (1938), p. 545.

[2] *Strike Profiles*, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. LII, No. 4 (December 1944), p. 319f.

[3] If L is the number of working days lost, W the number of workers involved, and D the average duration of strike, then $L = WD$. In the index, equal weights are given to W and WD.

[4] Spielmans seems to impute an aesthetic value to his profiles, as 'looking now like a towering Manhattan skyline, now like the low silhouette of a battleship'.

[5] See article quoted, *Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* (January 1948).

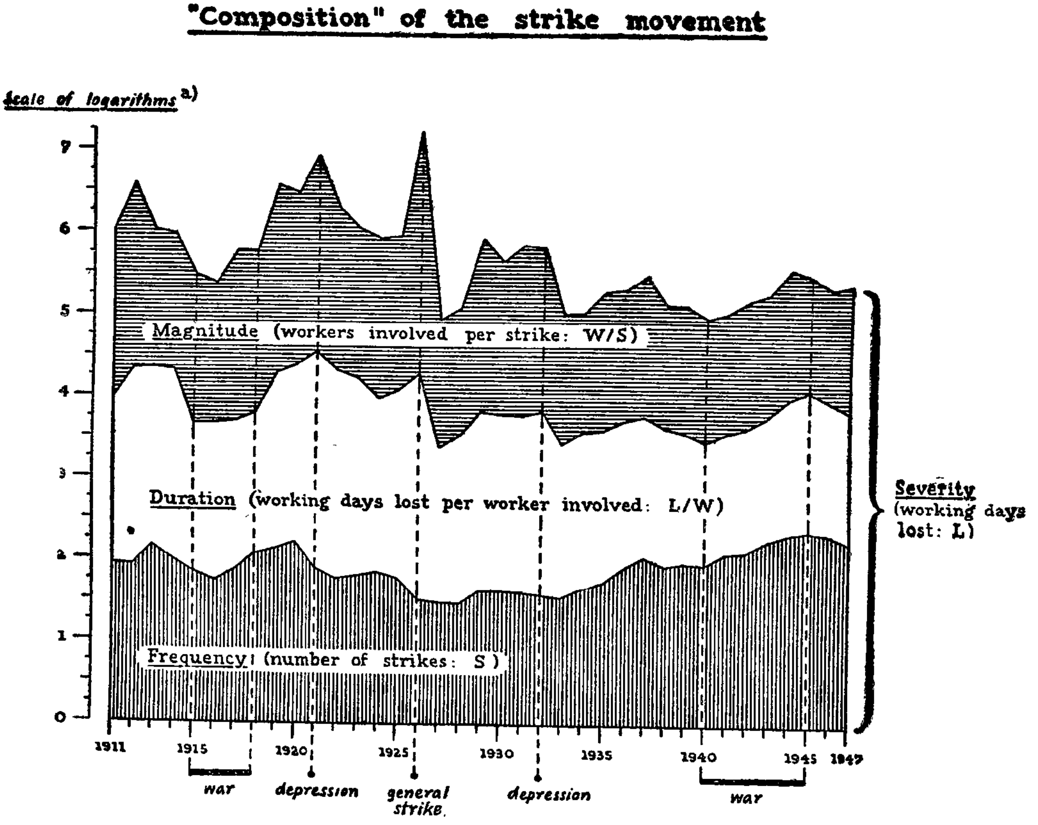
Numbers of strikes in particular groups of industries correlated with numbers of strikes in all other industries,* 1911 *to* 1947. (See p. 151.)

	r
Mining and quarrying:	·5698
Textiles:†	·1390
Metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc.:	·8442
Transport:	·7936
Building, decorating, public works contracting, etc.:	·3898
Clothing:	·4739
Other industries and services:	·5148

* Logarithms of these numbers were preferred here. The chance of further strikes occurring in an industry may be thought to depend to some extent on the number of strikes taking place in the industry itself, as well as on other aggravations – possibly from outside the industry. By taking logarithms of the numbers of strikes we measure the second of these factors rather than the first.

† The weakness of the correspondence in respect of textiles is no doubt to be related to the economic peculiarities of the industry (local concentration, seasonality, sensitiveness to foreign competition, and so on).

average size of strike (i.e. workers involved per strike) × the average duration of strike (i.e. working days lost per worker involved). If the number of strikes = S, the number of workers involved = W, and the number of working days lost = L, then this relationship can be expressed as $L = S \times \frac{W}{S} \times \frac{L}{W}$. If logarithms of the three components are taken, the composition of the loss of working days through strikes can be shown graphically (Graph 10).[1]



GRAPH 10

a] For the sake of clarity in presentation, magnitude is given in *tens* of workers involved per strike, duration in days lost per *ten* workers involved, and frequency in *tens* of strikes. The product of these 'components' is thus equivalent to *tens* of days lost. (All figures relate to strikes *beginning* in years in question.)

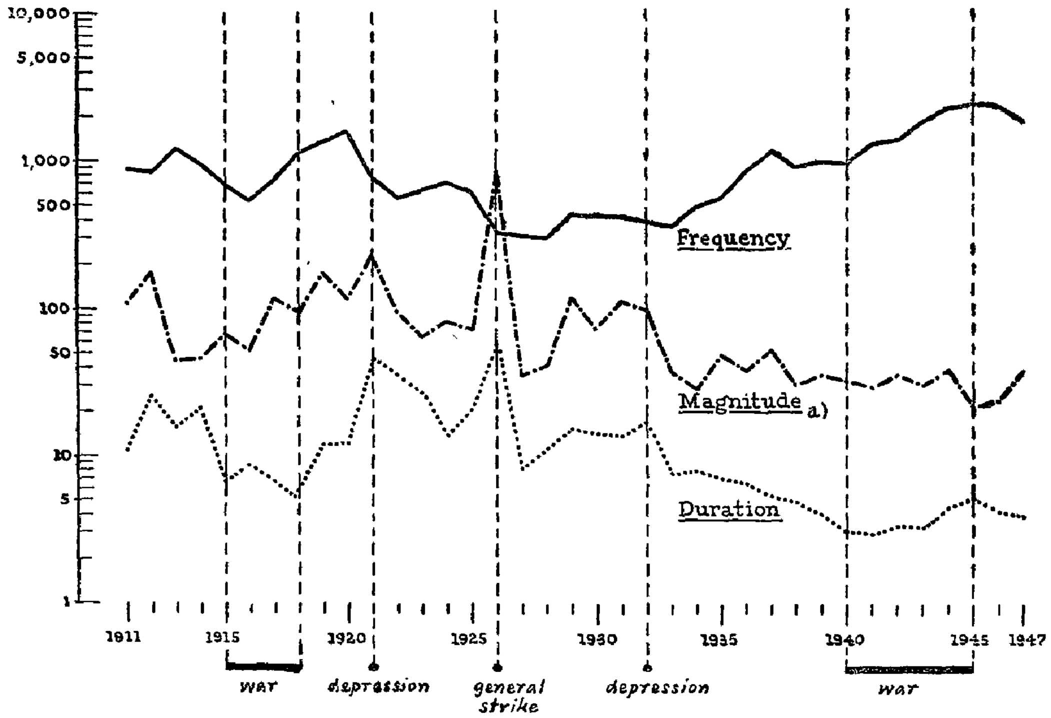
The relative thicknesses of the three layers in the 'sandwich' show the changing importance of the components at different times. The size and length of strikes in the period of industrial unrest which preceded the first world war, the increasing frequency and size of strikes during the war itself when the main concern was to expedite settlement; the explosion of big and long strikes after the war

[1] (The figures relate to strikes beginning in the years in question.) The most straightforward form of diagram would have been one in which S was shown at the bottom, then W/S, then L/W. In such a diagram, the second line from the top would represent S × W/S: i.e. W, or the number of workers involved. However, because W is so closely connected with L, it seemed better to draw L/W in the middle and W/S at the top; and this makes the second line represent S × L/W: i.e. the number of strikes × the average length of strike — a figure which (if divided by the number of working days in the year) indicates the 'density' of strikes or the number of strikes current per working day.

ended; the falling away of all components until 1926; the marked limitation of the size and length of strikes afterwards; the revival of big strikes at the end of the 'twenties; the renewed decline in big and long strikes during the depression, and the emergence of the frequency of strikes as the most important component — so much is clear at a glance.

The size and length of strikes are most likely to reflect the influence of Trade Union policy and of the prevailing political atmosphere. If the three components are plotted as single lines, certain trends become more evident (Graph 11).

"Components" of the strike movement



GRAPH 11

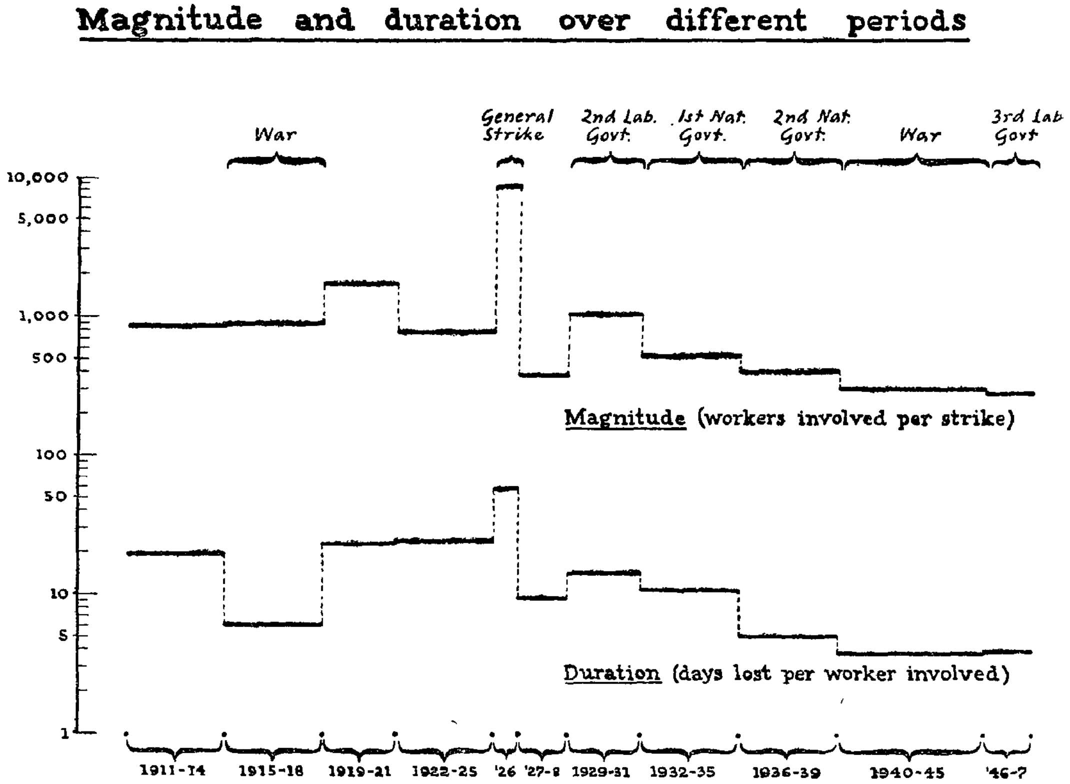
a] *Tens* of workers involved per strike.

While the average size and average length of strikes are affected by the depressions of 1921 and 1932, they show a double trend whose watershed is 1926; and the trend of the number of strikes moves in an opposite sense. The similarity of the movements of average size and average length of strikes is noteworthy. General trends apart, it will be noted that the periodicity of the fluctuations of average size and average length of strikes is much shorter than of the number of strikes, and shows almost an annual alternation — except that following the trough years of depression the decline persists.

Moreover, there is a lag in the reaction of all three components, in that the trough of strike activity as measured by them follows the trough of the depression. The lag is more marked in the average size and average length of strikes than in their number (indeed, the trough of a depression tends to be marked by a peak in average size and average length). This is due to the development of

big and stubborn defensive strikes to stave off wage-cuts, until the persistence of the depression begins to operate as a deterrent.

The effect of non-economic influences can be better seen if the movements of size and length of strikes are examined over broader periods selected — inevitably, somewhat arbitrarily — for their political colour rather than their economic tone (Graph 12).

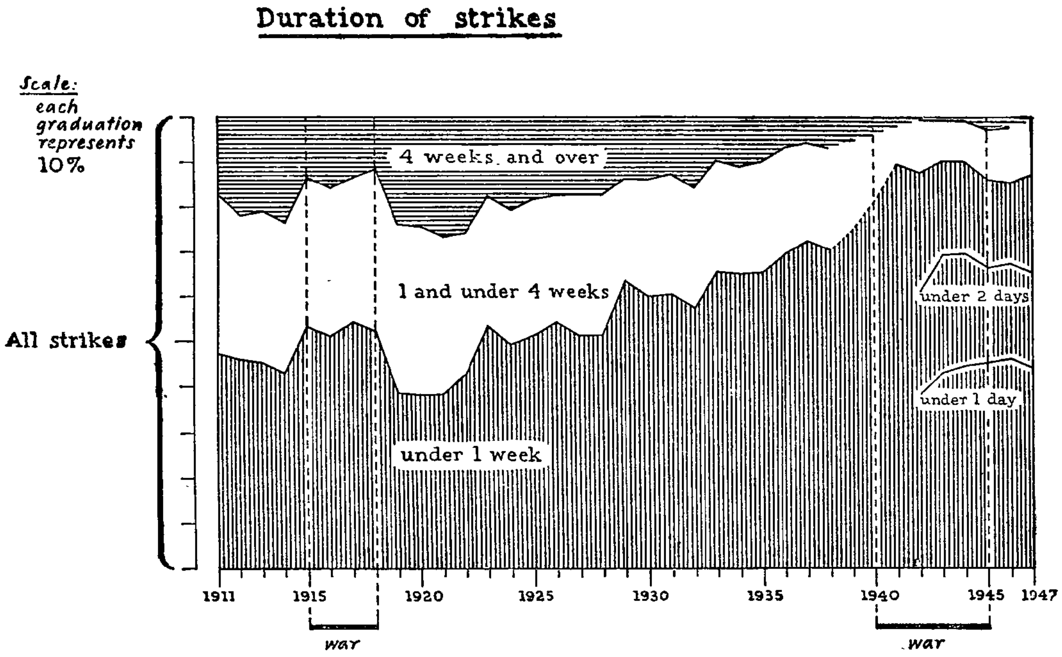


GRAPH 12

Here one can see the effect of the first war, of the transition to peace, of the uneasy lull accompanying the post-war depression, of the removal of the coal subsidy in 1926 (when the pent-up unrest was finally released), and of the demoralization following the collapse of the General Strike. Between 1929 and 1931 there was a marked rise in the size and length of strikes, much of which is accounted for by textiles. But the number of strikes also rose in these years; the turn of boom into depression is of course always a keen period for strikes, and at this time it was accompanied by a rather kinder political atmosphere. Since 1931 the decline in size and length has been fairly steady; after the economic crisis 'something unprecedented occurred: for seven whole years there was not a single strike involving at least one hundred thousand or more workers. It looked as though the British workers had forgotten how to strike, and that the labour movement had been dealt a death-blow'.[1] There was no doubt an element of disillusion, to which the political 'desertions' of 1931 and the psychological effects of the depression must have contributed; but it was hardly a death-blow.

[1] J. KUCZYNSKI, *A Short History of Labour Conditions in Great Britain and the Empire* (1942), p. 109.

Of course, averages of the size and length of strikes are in some ways misleading, because they tend to be inflated by a few big or long strikes.[1] But there was a real inhibition of big strikes after 1926: from 1911 to 1926 strikes involving 5000 workers and more accounted for 88.5 per cent of all working days lost, whereas the figure from 1927 to 1947 was only 55.7 per cent; nor is the drop to an important extent due to the inclusion of the 1926 figures themselves. The shortening of strikes may again be illustrated graphically (Graph 13).



GRAPH 13

The trend towards short strikes is explained by the increasing development and use of negotiating machinery, and by the growth of 'token' or lightning demonstration strikes.

If the proportion of short strikes is related to the total number of strikes, the change after 1926 comes out more clearly. Before 1926, speaking generally, the more strikes that took place the lower was the proportion of short strikes; but after 1926 this effect disappears. In other words, before 1926 a wave of strike activity used generally to be characterized by an increased proportion of long and stubborn strikes; after 1926, this was no longer so. Economically the Unions had to be, politically they were ready to be, more cautious in their support of strikes.

There seems to be a limited connexion between size and length of strikes. The strikes in which the decline in size is most evident are those which on the average are longest (lasting more than a month) and shortest (lasting less than a week). Before 1926 the highest average of workers per strike fell into the longest group (10 weeks and over), but after 1926 the highest average of workers per strike fell into the 2 to 4 weeks group.

[1] Over the period 1911-38 the average size of strike (workers directly and indirectly involved per strike) was well over 1000 workers; whereas the median size was little over 100. Similarly the average length of strike (working days lost per worker involved) was well over three weeks, but the median length was less than one week.

Period	*Workers involved per strike lasting —*				
	less than 1 week	*1 and less than 2 weeks*	*2 and less than 4 weeks*	*4 and less than 10 weeks*	*10 weeks and over*
Before 1926:*	468	882	2216	1766	2454
After 1926:†	328	771	1678	1213	1012
Percentage decrease in average size of strike after 1926:	30%	13%	24%	31%	59%

* 1911-25 – omitting the war years 1915-18, during which the pattern of strike activity was distorted.

† 1927-36.

Seasonality of strikes

> 'Can anyone recall a detective novel in which the non-occurrence of a single crime was attributed, not to the sagacity and resource of the principal character, but to the climate? . . . now that Scotland Yard has . . . pegged crime to the weather, we must contemplate a rising barometer with mixed feelings.'
>
> *The Times* (April 21st, 1947), in comment on a report that a decrease in crime in London during February was attributed by Scotland Yard to bad weather.

'It was an important day, this first Sunday of the strike, and much would depend on the barometer', wrote the historians of the 1889 dock strike.[1] 'Hot weather has a curious association with strikes', echoed another commentator on pre-1914 industrial unrest,[2] 'and August of 1911 registered temperatures of 97° in the shade.' A writer to *The Times* in that month[3] opined that there was indeed an intimate relation between the weather and the 'unrest and violence'; he quoted the work of an American army officer to the effect that 'exposure to tropical light at first stimulates and excites white men and afterwards renders them neurasthenic', and pointed out that in the current summer there had been a greater daily duration of sunlight, even if it had been of less than tropical intensity, and that British workers were 'entirely unaccustomed to such a prolonged and unremitting solar bombardment'; 'there are other reasons than those connected with farm and garden for earnestly desiring rain and a return to the normal proportion of grey days to which the Englishman is, zoologically, so perfectly adjusted'.

Seasonal strike fluctuations, observed Griffin,[4] are determined by two things:

> 'first the already-existing pattern of business, and second the greater capacity for resistance on the part of employees in the early summer and later summer as opposed to spring and winter. Here, as elsewhere, the weather shapes the affairs of men.'

The seasonal pattern for the United Kingdom is not unlike that for the United States: in both countries the main peak in the number of strikes comes in May,

[1] Ll. Smith and Nash, *The Story of the Dock Strike* (1889), p. 59.

[2] Raynes, *Coal and Its Conflicts* (1928), p. 115.

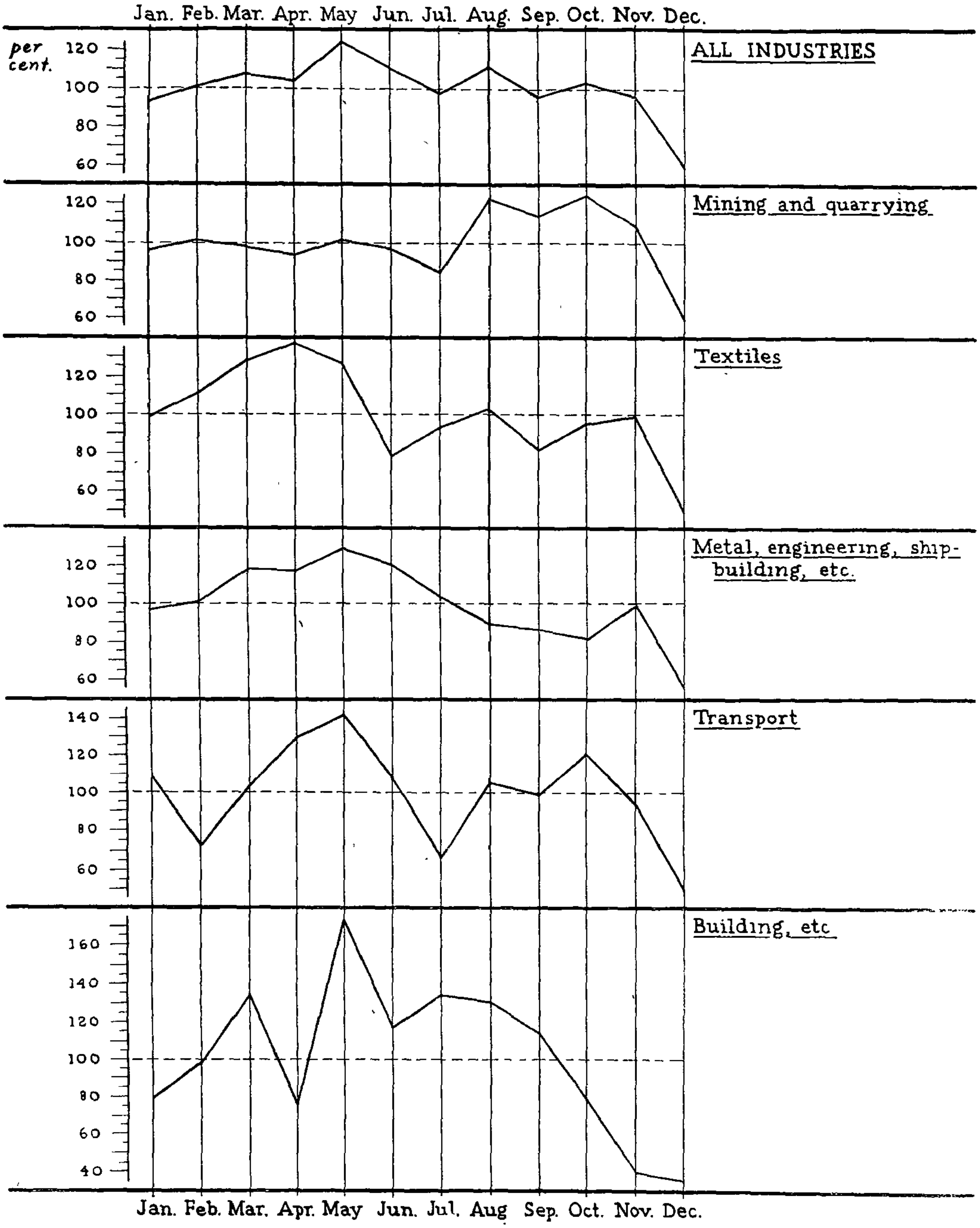
[3] August 19th, 1911. Askwith (*Industrial Problems and Disputes*, p. 149) remarks drily that those who held such opinions were soon disabused by a serious strike in Dundee in the bitter weather at the end of December.

[4] Op. cit., p. 54.

with a secondary peak in August — and, in the U.K., lesser peaks in March and October (Graph 14).

Seasonal frequency of strikes

Average number of strikes for each month of the year over the period 1919-1939[a] (excluding 1926), expressed as percentage of the monthly average for this period



GRAPH 14

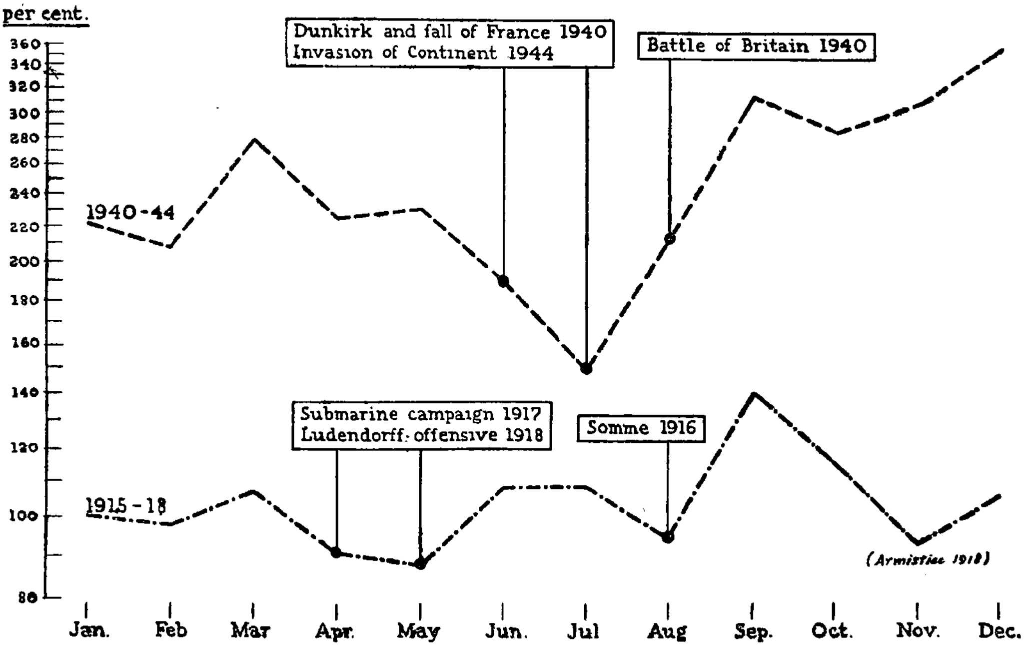
a] For textiles, 1924-39.

The December drop and the May peak (all industries) may be loosely ascribed to the influence of the winter and spring respectively, and there may indeed be a very general connexion between weather conditions and strikes.[1] But the explanation is probably economic rather than climatic; the spring and early summer strikes which are a feature of many countries' industrial experience are 'due above all to the fact that a number of industries work more, or even exclusively, during these seasons, which increase the prospects of a successful fight for the workers'.[2] On the whole it seems likely that — even in the U.K. — the effect of the weather on strikes is mainly secondary; and if the curves for the separate industries are examined, the differences which appear bear a fairly obvious relation to the state of activity in the trades themselves. (It is natural, for example, that the biggest seasonal strike fluctuations occur in the building trades, where the weather has the greatest influence on activity.)

The seasonal pattern of strikes is, understandably, distorted by war conditions. A special article in *The Times* after the first world war,[3] based on the Ministry of Labour's Report on conciliation and arbitration during the war

Seasonal frequency of strikes in the two wars, relative to peacetime experience

Average number of strikes for each month of the year over the periods 1915-18 and 1940-44, expressed as percentage of the corresponding figure for 1919-39 (excluding 1926)



GRAPH 15

[1] For example, the average number of strikes per month between 1924 and 1936 seems to show some association with the average monthly rainfall. But this probably means little, since a similar analysis in respect of the duration of strikes reveals nothing.

[2] *Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes* (I.L.O., Geneva, 1926), p. 16.

[3] February 18th, 1920.

years, suggested that some relation between strikes and the military situation was discernible: 'though there are the usual exceptions to the rule, it will be found that when our fortunes at the Front seemed to be lowest Labour troubles were smallest, and when we were doing well at the Front troubles were most acute at home.' In Graph 15, the strike patterns of the two world wars are related to that of the interwar period.

While it may be too much to claim that 'every bad week at the front redoubled the energies of the munition workers'[1] and made them postpone their domestic struggles, the general impact of major events on the war fronts may be seen reflected on the industrial front — with a relative concentration of strikes at a time when the decisive operations had spent their force and the immediate claims of patriotism had been met.

In peace and war alike, however, the incidence of holidays affects the strike pattern — strikes tending to decline before a holiday (this is presumably partly due to the need for cash) and to rise afterwards.

This examination confirms the general impression that economic conditions influence the incidence of strikes to some extent, although their size and length are probably more dependent on other things. In considering the way in which this influence is exerted, however, we find that it is sometimes more-or-less direct (e.g. through the effects of unemployment) and sometimes indirect (e.g. through the fluctuations of Trade Union membership, through the momentum of strike movements, and even, possibly, through weather conditions).

APPENDIX

Strikes and unemployment statistics

Workers on strike were disqualified from applying for unemployment benefit by the Acts of 1911, 1920 and 1935: it was held from the first to be unfair to allow a fund to which employers had contributed to be used to support workers on strike against their employers. (The fact that workers also contributed was ignored: there was the usual implication that all strikes are 'aggressive' acts of the workers.)

Clause 4 of the 1924 Act, however, provided that the disqualifying clause of the main Act

> 'shall not apply in any case in which the insured contributor proves that . . . the stoppage is due to an employer acting in a manner so as to contravene the terms or provisions of any agreement existing between a group of employers, where the stoppage takes place or of a national agreement to either of which the employers and employees are contracting parties.'

[1] FISHER, *A History of Europe* (1936 edn.), p. 1154. 'Personally, I doubt', wrote Askwith, 'whether the fluctuations of the war generally had direct effect upon the number or importance of disputes, but . . . I think the commencement of the battle of the Somme on May 27' (1918), 'and the German offensive near Rheims on July 15th, did directly affect disputes. From May to September there was much greater peace throughout Great Britain' (*Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 449).

A case arose in 1924 itself, which turned on the question whether or not Bristol colliery owners were parties to the national agreement or whether the Mining Association had powers to enter into an agreement on their behalf; and finally the umpire allowed the miners' claim.[1]

The Acts of 1911 and 1920 had roundly disqualified all workers, even the 'indirectly involved', from drawing unemployment benefit during a strike; but after a good deal of controversy and two amendments a form of words (section 26 of the 1935 Act) was produced which allowed the 'indirectly involved', or some of them, to claim unemployment benefit:

> 'An insured contributor who has lost employment by reason of a stoppage of work which was due to a trade dispute at the factory, workshop or other premises at which he was employed shall be disqualified for receiving benefit as long as the stoppage of work continues, except in a case where he has, during the stoppage of work, become *bona fide* employed elsewhere in the occupation which he usually follows, or has become regularly engaged in some other occupation; provided that this rule shall not apply where he proves (*a*) that he is not participating in, or financing, or directly interested in the trade dispute which caused the stoppage of work; and (*b*) that he does not belong to a grade or class of workers of which, immediately before the commencement of the stoppage, there were members employed at the premises at which the stoppage is taking place, any of whom are participating in, or financing, or directly interested in the dispute. Where separate branches of work which are commonly carried on as separate businesses on separate premises are in any case carried on in separate departments on the same premises, each of those departments shall be deemed to be a separate factory or workshop, or separate premises, as the case may be.'

The formulation of category (*b*) will no doubt result in some few of the 'indirectly involved' being included in the unemployed totals. But even if all strikers were so included they would not in normal years amount to a significant proportion: most recent strikes are short, and unemployment benefit could not in any case be claimed until three days had elapsed.

* * *

Section 2: Special conditions in the different groups of industries

Against this background, we must next examine the industrial distribution of strikes in the light of the special conditions which have affected the different industries. In the following tables, the three series of strike statistics have been related to the number of workers in employment,[2] so that — although the employment figures are imperfect — it is possible to get some idea of the importance of strikes relative to the effective size of the industries in which they have happened.

[1] See *The Times* (September 12th and 22nd, 1924).

[2] For a description of the way in which these figures were calculated, see Appendix A at the end of this section.

Working days lost per worker in employment (per year)[1]

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1911–14	8.16	1.46	0.96	1.51	1.11	0.25
1915–18	0.98	0.74	0.57	0.16	0.19	0.18
1919–21	23.88	4.83	3.02	1.40	0.81	0.42
1922–26*	24.62	0.95	2.87	0.50	1.11	0.05
1927–28	0.56	0.34	0.04	0.01	0.13	0.16
1929–32	1.23	5.47	0.16	0.05	0.08	0.03
1933–39	1.04	0.11	0.14	0.15	0.08	0.07
1940–45†	1.22	0.05	0.17	0.10	0.04	0.03
1911–45†	8.70	1.54	0.83	0.43	0.42	0.14

* Excluding General Strike of 1926 (but not coal strike). † January to June.

Strikers as a percentage of workers in employment (per year)[2]

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1911–14	34.4	7.2	5.3	15.1	2.4	1.6
1915–18	22.7	8.1	8.7	3.0	2.5	1.7
1919–21	87.4	27.7	9.7	18.4	4.5	2.7
1922–26*	26.7	4.7	6.1	6.2	4.5	0.5
1927–28	7.2	1.4	0.7	0.2	0.7	0.7
1929–32	15.4	27.5	1.0	0.6	0.7	0.2
1933–39	22.2	1.4	2.2	1.9	1.2	0.9
1940–45†	35.7	1.0	4.0	2.8	1.9	1.1
1911–45†	32.4	8.9	4.7	5.4	2.2	1.2

* Excluding General Strike. † January to June.

(Strictly speaking, this table shows the number of separate 'strike-acts' per worker in employment. The *Gazette's* figure of 'workers involved' in strikes — on which the table is based — really represents the number of *separate 'strike acts'* of workers involved in strikes: i.e. the number of occasions on which they have taken strike action during the course of the year. Since some workers, notably coal-miners, strike more than once in a single year, they are counted more than once in the year's total.[3])

[1] For the purpose of comparing pre-war, war and post-war periods (1911-14 and 1936-39, 1915-18 and 1940-45, 1919-20 and 1945-47), the following figures are also given:

Working days lost per worker in employment (per year)

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1919–20	8.97	4.00	3.45	1.98	0.86	0.58
1936–39	1.12	0.12	0.17	0.18	0.08	0.09
1945†–47*	0.61	0.04	0.27	0.67	0.02	0.16

* January to June. † July to December.

[2] Figures for further comparison:

Strikers as a percentage of workers in employment (per year)

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1919–20	83.0	23.7	12.8	26.7	5.0	3.7
1936–39	27.9	1.4	2.9	2.0	1.6	1.2
1945†–47*	29.9	0.8	4.7	8.0	0.6	1.7

* January to June. † July to December.

[3] Figures of the *net* number of workers who took part in strikes during each year are available for coal-mining for every year since 1933, as well as for certain years previous. The *net* number of workers per year in the mining and quarrying group who were involved in strikes between 1911 and June 1945 was 27.1 per cent of the number of workers in employment. This figure may be compared with the *gross* figure given above, of 32.4 per cent. (Although the net figures relate to strikes *in progress* during the years in question and the gross figures relate to strikes *beginning* in the years, the discrepancy is naturally small over the period as a whole.)

Strikes per 10,000 workers in employment (per year)[1]

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1911–14	1.39	1.12	1.54	0.72	1.19	0.61
1915–18	1.07	0.54	1.03	0.44	1.15	0.60
1919–21	1.62	0.64	1.24	0.79	2.56	0.70
1922–26	1.30	0.39	0.58	0.50	0.89	0.35
1927–28	1.04	0.28	0.34	0.13	0.46	0.14
1929–32	1.62	0.68	0.40	0.19	0.56	0.31
1933–39	3.55	0.71	0.66	0.34	0.79	0.39
1940–45*	9.71	0.72	1.43	0.60	0.97	0.46
1911–45*	2.82	0.66	1.00	0.47	1.01	0.46

* January to June.

Some preliminary comment may be made on the wide differences in the propensity of workers in different industries to strike — a subject which is further discussed in the regional analysis. The relevant factors are of course innumerable. The age of the industry, its expansion or contraction, the rapidity of technical change, the size and efficiency of the majority of firms; the general prosperity of the workers concerned, their level of earnings, the extent of unemployment; the seasonality, insecurity, casual or dangerous nature of the work; the prevalent method of wage payment, the degree of occupational or craft differentiation and the extent to which this leads to wage differentials within the industry and within particular establishments; the proportion of women and young workers, and of black-coated workers employed; the extent of Union organization, the quality of the Union leadership, the continued applicability of existing agreements, the efficiency of collective bargaining machinery, the success of previous strikes; the general social conditions of the majority of the workers in the industry; the high economic policy, foreign and domestic, of the Government — this and much else is reflected in greater or smaller degree in the countless strike-producing frictions which arise. Because, however, the groups of industries for which strike data are available are heterogeneous, differences in the propensity to strike can be accounted for only in very general terms.

In general, of course, it is not surprising that unrest during the period, as indicated by strikes, should have affected those workers who were hardest hit by the inter-war depression — in particular, miners and textile workers — and furthermore that the unrest should have been aggravated if workers were tied to these industries[2] for any reason: industrial (owing to the inapplicability of workers' special skills to other trades), 'locational' (owing to lack of alternative employment locally), economic (owing to reluctance to take a lower wage than

[1] Figures for further comparison:

Strikes per 10,000 workers in employment (per year)

Period	*Mining, etc.*	*Textiles*	*Metal, etc.*	*Transport*	*Building*	*Clothing*
1919–20	1.77	0.80	1.49	1.02	2.96	0.87
1936–39	4.59	0.78	0.77	0.38	1.01	0.51
1945†–47*	17.01	0.52	1.46	0.85	0.65	0.50

* January to June. † July to December.

[2] See Appendix B to this section, p. 185.

that which had previously been earned), domestic (owing to family and household ties),[1] traditional,[2] psychological and so on.

Mining and quarrying

The vast majority of strikes under this heading are of course strikes of coal miners.[3] It has often been said that the isolation of coal miners from the rest of the population has produced characteristically different traditions and modes of thought:

> 'Coal-miners have always been a class apart, with mentality and aspiration unlike those of the rest of the working class. This spiritual isolation is largely a reflection of physical isolation. Living remote from the quick life of the town, the collier has developed speech and habits that effectively cut him off from his fellows. If this is so in an age of developed communications when industries are largely concentrated about the coal-fields, how wide must have been the gulf in earlier centuries when the collieries were sometimes several days' journey from the centres of urban life.
>
> 'This geographical isolation had an intimate effect on the relations between employer and employed. The proprietor or lessee of a coal-mine was usually dependent on local supplies of labour: if his workers left him they could not easily be replaced, and even a temporary stoppage might destroy the capital sunk over long years in the colliery. To safeguard against such loss the owner often sought to bind the worker under a long-period contract, with penalties more or less drastic for breaches of the engagement, and labour was thus rendered immobile.'[4]

It would of course be captious to interpret the strike-history of the industry too narrowly as a hangover from the past, although the historical background is more important than in other trades where technical methods have been more radically changed, and where wages have been more flexible because they have represented a smaller proportion of production costs.[5]

The following have been the most noteworthy strikes in the industry during

[1] HILDA JENNINGS, *Bryn Mawr* (1934), p. 85, remarks that in certain mining areas where tied cottages were not the rule, 'the workmen who own a cottage are tied to the house in bad times by the fact that their savings are invested in fixed property and that they are unable to realize them at times when employment is at a low ebb and money is scarce. The importance of this fact in binding unemployed miners to the distressed areas is considerable'.

[2] It is noteworthy, by contrast, that the Scots tradition of emigration resulted in the moving to Corby during the depression of 'numerous families, complete with shop-keepers and even hairdressers' from the Motherwell district, who 'recreated in this corner of Northamptonshire a vigorous and thrifty and Scottish community' BRINLEY THOMAS, *The Influx of Labour into the Midlands, Economica* (November 1938), p. 421. (People even moved from Scotland to Wales, although Wales was more depressed than Scotland.) The author also commented on the readiness with which Welsh, as well as Scottish, women would move relatively long distances — unlike the English.

[3] The few big strikes of quarrymen during the period are referred to on p. 198, n. 1.

[4] ASHTON, *The Coal-Miners of the Eighteenth Century, Economic History* (January 1928), p. 307.

[5] In 1919, 75·3 per cent of coal mining production costs was accounted for by wages and salaries; in 1924-25 the percentage was 74·3 (*Committee on Industry and Trade, Further Factors in Industrial and Commercial Efficiency* (1928), pp. 78-9). In recent years this percentage is possibly somewhat lower, although in 1945 wages alone (not including salaries) still amounted to about two-thirds of total proceeds (Ministry of Fuel and Power *Statistical Digest* (1945), *Cmd.* 6920, p. 44, table 40).

the period: that of 1912 (a national strike for a minimum wage for all underground workers; of 1919 (a series of large strikes in a disillusion which was accentuated by the neglect of the Sankey recommendations); of 1920 (a national strike, for a wage advance not related to output — the so-called 'datum-line' strike); of 1921 (for the retention of the National Pool of profits which had been operating since 1917 under Government control, and the maintenance of a national rate); of 1926 (a national strike for the maintenance of the 'national minimum percentage', which the withdrawal of the 1925 subsidy had made impossible, and against the lengthening of hours of work); of 1930 (a series of big strikes mainly on the question of hours); and of 1944 (a series of strikes arising out of dissatisfaction with the minimum wages awards).

Much of the circumstantial history of these great strikes has of course already been written, and there is no need to recapitulate it here. More fundamentally, as Cole has argued,[1] the density of population in mining areas, and the concentration of miners into large groups living a common social life apart from other workers, have made organization natural, while the very conditions of production make for a democratic Trade Union machine:

> 'The miner not only works in the pit: he lives in the pit village, and all his immediate interests are concentrated at one point. The town factory worker, on the other hand, lives often far from his place of work and mingles with workers of other callings. The townsman's experience produces perhaps a broader outlook, and a quicker response to social stimuli coming from without; but the miners' intense solidarity and loyalty to their Unions is undoubtedly the result of the conditions under which they work and live. . . . their isolation ministers to their own self-sufficiency and loyalty one to another . . . They are narrow, and slow to understand others or to feel the influence of outside public opinion.'

The propensity to take strike action is to some extent a measure of the loyalty and solidarity which is characteristic of miners the world over. 'Miners are not averse', wrote Askwith,[2] 'to striking on slight pretext. They like to "play" at intervals, and then return to scrabble harder in the pits whence they can direct their thoughts with some contempt to the people who have to pass all their hours on the surface.'

Possibly the isolation and industrial homogeneity of mining areas, as well as the inapplicability of hard-won mining skill to other trades, has helped to tie miners to their industry even when it was most depressed: the figures given in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* between 1927 and 1937 relating to transfers of labour from coal mining to other industries show that a yearly average of little more than 2½ per cent of miners found employment elsewhere.[3] In these circum-

[1] See *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry* (1923), p. 7.

[2] *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 201.

[3] *Ministry of Labour Gazette* (November issues). The *net* loss by transfers from coal mining was well under 2 per cent per year: coal miners—underground workers at any rate — going mainly, as might be expected, into other mining and not, as would appear at first sight, into building and public works. ('The high mobility of coal-miners with respect to the group building and public works contracting has little meaning; it is due to the classification of coal-miners who are given a week or two's work on public works as members of that industry.' See MAKOWER, MARSCHAK and ROBINSON, *Studies in Mobility of Labour*, Part II, *Oxford Economic Papers* (September 1940), p. 49.

stances the membership of the miners' Unions has been high and comparatively stable, and they have been able to buttress their bargaining position by maintaining exceptional solidarity. Moreover, the legacy of the nineteenth century — the age and inefficiency of many of the workings, the fact that 'the physical conditions of the mining industry in this country are of steadily increasing difficulty,'[1] the deficiencies of British safety and health practice — coupled with a long history of unfulfilled recommendations and promises, has increased their bitterness and enhanced their tradition of struggle as compared with workers in other trades. Again, the mine-owners, as employers, have been correspondingly harsher in their attitude: Crook[2] contrasted their 'crude methods' in 1926 with the 'clever and persuasive use of all the arts of psychological appeal' by the railway companies.

The growing predominance of mining strikes over the period has reflected the exceptionally bad technical, competitive and social traditions of the industry. Bad mining conditions are of course common to all countries, and British standards of mining did not keep abreast of new developments in many of the mines of Europe and America.[3]

The bitterness of labour relations is underlined by the fact that miners, more than workers in other industries, tend to strike more than once in the same year. A measure of the extent to which this happens can be made as follows. As has been pointed out, the gross figure of workers involved in strikes really represents the number of *separate 'strike-acts' of workers involved in strikes*, since some workers strike more than once in the same year and are therefore counted more than once in the year's total. However, the *Gazette* has for many years also given net figures of strikers for coal mining,[4] and the gross figure divided by the net figure represents *the yearly average number of strikes per striking miner*. This provides some measure of repetitive striking.[5]

[1] *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Metal Industries* (1928), p. 438.

[2] *The General Strike* (1931), p. 378.

[3] See GRENFELL, *Coal* (1947), pp. 42-3. It is too much, however, to argue, as Grenfell does, that American mines have been 'much safer' than British mines, on the grounds that accident-frequency has recently been twice as high here as in the U.S.A. This point — naturally enough often made in the States — holds good only if accident-frequency is reckoned in relation to tons of coal produced, where it is of course affected by the higher American productivity-per-man. (Over the period 1938-45 the yearly production of coal per man was, for the U.S.A. (bituminous mines), 1301 tons, whereas for the U.K. it was 286 tons.) But for the purpose of comparing relative safety in mineworking accident-frequency should be reckoned in relation to men employed or, better, to man-hours worked. The comparative figures for fatal accidents are as follows:

Fatal accidents, 1938-45 (*yearly average*):

	U.K.	*U.S.A*
per million tons produced:	3.75	2.09
per thousand workers employed:	1.07	2.50
per million man-hours worked:	0.57	1.45

(The yearly loss, through strikes, of working time per miner, over the same period, was well over a week in the U.S.A. as against little more than one day in this country. (Sources: U.K., *Statistical Abstracts of the Ministry of Fuel and Power, Cmd.* 6920 *and* 7548; U.S.A., *Statistical Data Concerning the Bituminous Coal Industry, National Coal Association* (April 1947).)

[4] And for industry as a whole. (These estimates are based solely on the Ministry of Labour's records of whether particular establishments were involved in strikes more than once in a year, and if so what classes and numbers of workers were so involved.)

[5] In an article on *Strikes and Their Changing Economic Context* in the *Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* for September 1947, I used (p. 295) a different measure of repetitive striking. There, the difference between the gross and net figure was taken as a

Thus it can be said that in 1912, for example, those miners who were involved in strikes were involved, on the average, 1.11 times; in 1919 and 1920, 1.20 and 1.27 times; in 1926, the year of the seven-month national coal strike, the figure was naturally low (1.04 times); in 1934, 1.24 times. Thereafter, repetitive striking showed — until recent years — a tendency to increase, the figure reaching peaks of 1.86 in 1937, 1.95 in 1941, and even 2.02 in 1945.

On the face of it, it does not seem surprising that an industry with the highest yearly proportion of strikers should also have had a high proportion of strikers striking more than once in the year. Although repetitive striking seems to have been largely ignored in earlier years and yearly figures are not available until 1934, its level in that year and its subsequent increase suggest that the phenomenon had been growing for some time. An increase in repetitive striking (measured in this way) means (1) that the proportion of strikers who strike more than once is increasing, and/or (2) that those who strike more than once are striking an increasing number of times. An increase in repetitive striking suggests different things in different circumstances. If it takes place despite a decline in the net number of strikers, it may reflect the activity of a 'hard core' of persistent strikers; if it is accompanied by an increase in the net number of strikers, it may reflect a mounting dissatisfaction which since 1926 has not found expression in a nation-wide strike.[1] National strikes, whatever their other consequences, have at least ensured that the workers' case received nation-wide attention.

Textiles

The social background of textile workers, particularly in cotton, is like that of coal miners, in so far as they live in 'cotton towns' and 'wool towns' as miners live in mining villages,[2] and access to suitable alternative employment — and therefore escape from depressed conditions — has been less easy than for other workers. These conditions of living, as well as many other factors such as the employment of large numbers of juveniles and married women, have resulted in an industrial immobility which has been 'greatly strengthened', in the words of the Cotton Working Party Report,[3] 'by the tenacious and conservative character of the Lancashire people'.

In 1937 the proportion of married women in cotton was 52 per cent as against 29 per cent for all industries. They were in a real sense tied to the industry in order to make their family income adequate. Professor Brinley Thomas, com-

[1] Repetitive striking has, indeed, declined lately, particularly since nationalization: in 1948 the average number of strikes per striking miner was 1.35, and in 1949 it was 1.24. Striking is still widespread, however: the National Coal Board (whose strike figures are admittedly more inclusive than those of the Ministry of Labour — see pp. 303-4) reported that in 1948 strikes had occurred in more than half the collieries of the country, despite the new pit conciliation scheme.

[2] Textile towns are usually less homogeneous than mining centres, if only because of the presence of textile engineering.

[3] The authors of *Readjustment in Lancashire* (Manchester University Economics Research Section, 1936), p. 24, suggest that 'the very thrift of the workers before the war, which led many of them to purchase their own homes or to invest money in local concerns', contributed materially to their immobility.

percentage of the gross figure: i.e. the additional 'strike-acts' of those miners who struck more than once in the year was presented as a proportion of the 'strike-acts' of all miners involved in strikes. (I would, incidentally, take this opportunity of correcting the heading of the table as there given.)

menting (*Economica*, November 1938) on the 1937 Ministry of Labour report on industrial migration, noted that, although the employment of married women mitigates to some extent the effect of men's unemployment, for this very reason 'when net advantages are considered from the point of view of the family as a unit, there can be little doubt that the costs of movement for the average household in Lancashire are much higher than in a coal-mining area'. (It is, however, true that the size of textile workers' families is relatively small — possibly not so much because of the employment of married women as because the employment of women generally tends, if not to dissuade women from marrying, at any rate to induce them to postpone marriage.[1]) Thomas also remarks on the 'relative immobility of Lancashire women', in view of the fact that when they did move they often moved no further than a neighbouring area — the Potteries, for example — with poor employment prospects.

In textile areas, as in coal areas, history dies hard: 'those who live in an area dominated by one industry tend to have a limited horizon; to seek a job in some other industry or in some other district is a plunge into the unknown. It is not surprising that the cotton operative, for many years after 1920, failed to realize the changes which had come into his world, lived on oft-repeated hopes that recovery was imminent, and waited for the improvements that never came.'[2] The contraction of the export trade following the first world war, in the face of foreign competition and tariffs, was passed on to the workers in the form of persistent short-time working and wage reductions; and short-time working acts as an added anchor to the worker for whom there is no regular full-time work in the industry of his home town. Thus the area was exposed from all sides to the full-scale unemployment of the depression.

As regards the more specific causes of strikes — as distinct from the underlying causes of discontent — there have been a number of recurrent 'pinprick' issues: fines for bad work, lower earnings due to bad material, 'the insistence of some firms that their employees should put back part of their earnings into the firm. At one firm weavers before securing employment had to purchase their own looms'[3] — not to mention questions arising from a complicated system of wage payment.

The chief textile strikes during the period, mainly of cotton operatives, have been as follows: those of 1911 (one of woolcombers for a wage increase, and one of cotton workers against the employment of non-Union labour); of 1912 (of jute workers, for a wage increase); of 1918 (two strikes in cotton, one for unemployment pay for time lost by a reduction in hours imposed by the Control Board, one for a wage increase); of 1919 (in cotton, jute and hosiery, on questions of hours and wage increases); of 1921 and 1929 (both in cotton, against wage reductions); of 1930 (in wool, against wage reductions); of 1931 (in cotton, on the issue of 'more looms to a weaver'); and of 1932 (two strikes in cotton against wage decreases). Four of these great strikes (the cotton strikes of 1911, 1921 and 1931, and the jute strike of 1912) developed into lockouts. Indeed, it seems that more workers were locked out in the textile industry than in any

[1] See *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), p. 428 (table); also Glass, *Changes in Fertility in England and Wales, 1851 to 1931 (Political Arithmetic* (1938), p. 206).
[2] *Readjustment in Lancashire* (1936), loc. cit.
[3] P.E.P. *Report on the Cotton Industry* (1934), p. 88.

other during the period under review;[1] the prevalence of short-time working (involving, sometimes, shutting down for whole weeks) making this weapon the readier for employers to handle.

The multiplicity and cumulative character of the issues involved in the strikes of 1929-32 is discussed in the P.E.P. *Report on the Cotton Industry* (1934).[2] The 'more-looms-to-a-weaver' issue involved disputed questions of wages, employment of different grades of workers, reinstatement of discharged workers, quality of material,[3] and so on, and it was further complicated by the fact that some firms which had remained loyal to the prevailing agreement found themselves losing orders to other firms which had refused to comply with certain of its provisions in order to achieve a disguised wage reduction.[4]

Despite the high proportion of textile workers who have struck over the period as a whole, the number of separate strikes has been low in proportion to the size of the industry. The history of collective bargaining in the industry is a long one; and it has been claimed that the standing machinery for dealing with local and district differences, which was extended on the basis of the 1893 Brooklands Agreement, has been able to obviate many small strikes:

> 'Mr. John Smethurst, late Secretary of the Master Spinners' Federation . . . was able to say that, while the number of disputes affecting that Federation would aggregate in any one year in all the districts to between 600 and 700, not more than twenty of these ever reached the point of having to be discussed between the Central Committees in Manchester. "It is remarkable that out of these hundreds of disputes not more than an average of two or three per year have resulted in a strike at individual mills; that is a record which I think it would be difficult for any other industry to equal." '[5]

However, there was at that time no standing arrangement for arbitration on big issues, and 'it is well understood by the parties that failure to arrive at a settlement may involve a general stoppage'. Mr. Smethurst was speaking in 1923. But, as the P.E.P. Report pointed out eleven years later, strikes had troubled the whole industry since the war, and 'relations between employers and operatives had grown steadily worse, resulting eventually in complete breakdown, followed by slow and difficult re-establishment of conciliation machinery under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour. The attitude still tends to remain that what one side proposes the other will *ex hypothesi* reject.'[6]

It was, of course, the few more or less general stoppages referred to above

[1] See below, p. 300.

[2] See p. 83f.

[3] See the *Cotton Working Party Report* (1946), p. 83; and, for an account of the wage-implications of the more-looms agreement, HILTON (ed.), *Are Trade Unions Obstructive?* (1935), p. 80.

[4] With the fall in the price of cotton, wages were forming a bigger proportion of total costs; although in general this proportion is low.

[5] Quoted in *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), pp. 273-4.

[6] 'While', wrote the Minister of Labour (*Gazette* (October 1932), p. 360), 'one isolated issue may appear to be the immediate cause of the stoppage, it is clear that it has arisen from the virtual breakdown of the system of collective negotiation in this section' (the manufacturing section) 'of the cotton industry. For the past three years there has not been a single subject upon which it has been found possible to reach general agreement. Such agreements as have been made have been made independently of the normal machinery.'

which accounted for the high percentage of textile workers who went on strike during the period. It is interesting to compare the experience of miners and textile workers in the years of their heaviest strikes (i.e. the years in which the percentage of strikers in the respective industries was highest) with their experience in other years:

Strikers as a percentage of workers in employment

	(a) *Mining & Quarrying* %	(b) *Textiles* %	(*Strike-propensity of miners as compared with textile workers: a/b*)
7 years of heaviest striking*	81.8	29.4	(2.8)
All other years	18.6	3.3	(5.6)
All years (1911 to 1947)	32.8	8.6	(3.8)

* For mining: 1912, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1926, 1937, 1944;
For textiles: 1911, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1929, 1931, 1932.

Thus while, in general, miners strike more than textile workers, the excess is much less marked in the years of big-scale strike movements: in other words, the striking of textile workers has been more concentrated in years of big strikes than has that of miners.

The relative freedom of the textile industry from small strikes derives from the apparent apathy of textile workers on workshop issues. Cole[1] has drawn attention to the fact that workshop problems arise far less often in the cotton industry than, say, in engineering; and that therefore no workshop movement has arisen to cope with them. Whereas in engineering a great deal depends on the activity of rank-and-file workers, in cotton the problems can be, and are, left to the Union officials. The officials are therefore less subject to pressure from below, and are freer to confine themselves to the niceties of price-lists. It has indeed been suggested with some weight that the mathematical preoccupations of Trade Unionists in textiles have been partly responsible for the industry's backwardness:

> '. . . mechanical invention seems to have run dry towards the end of the nineteenth century. Even the prolonged and severe depression since 1921 has failed to rouse employers to strike out on new lines. Is it mere coincidence, it may be asked, that Trade Unionism has been equally conservative in the maintenance of a long-accustomed policy? The cotton operatives have been affected by the ideas of modern socialism to a smaller extent than almost any other large body of workers, and the Union officials have become expert administrative staff immersed in the technicalities of the price list system. It is at least an open question whether, if the cotton Unions had pursued a more militant policy, and applied a strong and persistent pressure for higher wages, the Lancashire genius would not have speedily supplied at least a modest measure of their desires.'[2]

[1] *Chaos and Order in Industry* (1920), p. 161.

[2] International Association for Social Progress (1931), *Report of the British Section on the Policy of High Wages*, p. 30. Cf. ROWE, *Wages in Practice and Theory* (1928), pp. 164-6 and 220-1.

It is noteworthy that, of all the depressed industrial areas in the middle 1930s, the Fascists are said to have concentrated on Lancashire.

Metal trades

This group is the most heterogeneous — apart from 'other industries' — of all the categories under which strike statistics are collected, both because of the number of separate industries comprised in 'metal, engineering, shipbuilding etc.' and also because of the unevenness of their economic fortunes.

(a) *Shipbuilding*

In the interwar years at any rate, the shipbuilding section, in proportion to its manpower, was the most liable to strikes,[1] and this is perhaps not surprising. It was asserted at a joint meeting of shipbuilding employers and Unions in 1934[2] that, while the shipping tonnage built per worker employed had been 6.6 in 1920 (when the need to replace war losses created an unprecedented boom for a greatly expanded industry), it was 10.4 in 1930: and that, since 1923, the rationalization of the industry had 'permanently displaced' at least 40,000 shipbuilders. (This was before the main depression and the establishment of National Shipbuilders' Security Limited, which bought up and closed down a round hundred of shipbuilding berths between 1930 and 1933.) Not only has shipbuilding suffered more acutely from depression than either of the other sections since demand in the industry is particularly sensitive to trade fluctuations,[3] but also, as was noted when it was once more required to expand the industry in wartime, shipbuilding workers have proved relatively immobile.[4] Wage differentials, according to a 1942 I.L.O. survey,[5] both by occupation and by district, were an important bar to the mobility of shipbuilders and ship-repairers. In particular, it was difficult to transfer men from ship-repairing to shipbuilding, partly because of a difference in wages and partly because ship-repairing was preferred by workers accustomed to it. To attempt to reduce even the more illogical wage differentials was a lengthy task and was being left largely to collective bargaining.

Moreover the demarcation practices which are part of the tradition of the industry have accounted for a high proportion of demarcation disputes — except in H.M. Dockyards, where greater 'interchangeability' was secured by a simplified three-fold grading of workers, with special machinery for coping with anomalies.[6]

[1] See below, p. 199, where the relative propensity to strike of shipbuilding workers is discussed.

[2] Reported in *The Times* (June 28th), 1934.

[3] The industry 'differed from all others', affirmed the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation before a Court of Inquiry in 1947 (*Cmd*. 7036, p. 8), 'in that it was essentially and all the time an international industry — the shipbuilder was continually in competition with shipbuilders in other countries'. 'When demand weakens, output falls off almost immediately since, in the nature of the case, there can be little or none of the practice known in many other industries as manufacturing for stock, this being precluded by the cost of laying up a ship. Further . . . speculative building in times of depression has also been exceptional' (*Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Metal Industries* (1928), p. 373).

[4] Union membership has possibly been higher and more stable in shipbuilding than in the other sections.

[5] *Wartime Transference of Labour in Great Britain*, p. 84.

[6] See *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Metal Industries* (1928), p. 394.

(b) *Iron and steel*

By contrast, the metal section has been the least prone to strike. For some time the iron and steel industry has been reported 'the brightest spot in the country's industrial relations'; indeed, apart from the industry's participation in the General Strike, there has not been a widespread strike for half a century.[1] This state of affairs has been variously attributed to the beneficent operation of the selling-price sliding scale,[2] the sober character of the leadership on both sides of a well-organized industry, the inclusiveness of the conciliation machinery, the provision for arbitration in the last resort, and so on. But, as has been pertinently pointed out, 'whether the leadership of an industry is conciliatory or militant in character must depend at bottom not on whether the industry is blessed with more or less than its fair share of men of good will, but on its underlying economic characteristics and economic circumstances have certainly enabled the leaders of the iron and steel workers to attain their ends by the pursuit of a conciliatory policy,'[3] at least since the rise of the Steel Smelters' Union. The relevant circumstances have been (*a*) a tendency for the operation of the selling-price sliding scale to induce agreement by employers and Union leadership,[4] particularly in support of protective tariffs — which have not been generally favoured by Trade Unions; (*b*) since output per man has greatly increased, and a considerable part of the workers' wages has been paid partly or wholly on a tonnage basis, their earnings, even in depression and despite a disproportionate collapse of iron and steel prices, have remained high even compared with those of workers in prosperous industries; (*c*) it has been possible to maintain these earnings because wages in the industry form in any case so small a fraction of total costs.[5]

(c) *Engineering*

The engineering section of the group, while it has been on the whole an expanding industry, is characterized (*a*) by rapid shifts of demand from some branches to others — particularly of course in wartime — which have resulted in important locational changes; (*b*) by constant changes in processes and breaking down of jobs, resulting in a marked falling-off in apprenticeship and development of semi-skilled work.[6] Consequently, dilution, by the influx of previously unskilled workers and of women; speeding-up, with the development of the

[1] There were strikes of Cumberland iron miners in 1917 and 1918; but it is perhaps significant that the Cumberland iron and coal industries are very closely linked, and federal relations have existed between the organizations of coal miners and iron ore miners in this area.

[2] Since 1940 the linking of wages to selling-price has in effect been abandoned, wage changes being related to the cost of living.

[3] Pool, *Wage Policy in Relation to Industrial Fluctuations* (1938), p. 178.

[4] Pool (op. cit., pp. 187-8) quotes other examples of 'collusion' induced by selling-price sliding scales.

[5] As examples of the extremes in the industry, the 1924 figure (*Committee on Industry and Trade, Further Factors in Industrial and Commercial Efficiency* (1928), pp. 78-9) for the proportion of total costs represented by wages and salaries was as follows: basic pig iron, 11.0 per cent; basic steel plates, 23.1 per cent. For shipbuilding (specified type of ship and cost of hull only) a figure of 33.3 per cent was quoted (wages only); for engineering, other than electrical engineering, 35.7 per cent (wages and salaries).

[6] Approximate percentage of semi-skilled workers: 1914, 20 per cent; 1921, 30 per cent; 1926, 45 per cent; 1933, 57 per cent. (See *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of the Metal Industries* (1928); and *Unemployment: Its Realities and Problems* (1933), p. 85. The value of the comparison is somewhat vitiated by the fact that employment was bad in the post-war years.)

conveyor and of 'efficiency' systems of operating it; and confusingly complex wages systems have provided the immediate causes of many strikes.

Possibly the propensity to strike of this section would have been greater had the rate of labour turnover been lower. Labour turnover in engineering has probably been comparatively high, since engineers (except in certain specialized branches such as railway engineering) are less tied to a specific section of industry, and still less to a specific locality, than miners or textile workers; their skill is more widely applicable. Thus in so far as labour turnover may indicate the 'push' of discontent as well as the 'pull' of better prospects elsewhere, one might expect less strike activity where turnover is high.

The 1922 lockout apart, there have been no national stoppages by these sections comparable with those in mining and textiles, although there have been considerable strike movements: for instance in 1913 (metal and engineering, mainly for wage increases); 1917 and 1918 (all sections, on a variety of issues — wage increases, dilution, victimization of shop stewards, and so on); 1919 and 1920 (all sections, on wages and hours); 1921 (engineering, against wage reductions). Many of the later wartime strikes had had a revolutionary flavour because of feeling against the Munitions of War Acts and conscription, coupled with the effect of the Russian revolutions. But craft divisions in engineering prevented wider developments:

> 'More than once, when the skilled workers were resisting some measure proposed by the Government, such as the taking of skilled men for military service, the introduction of "dilution on commercial work", or the extension of "payment by results", the general labour Unions, whose attitude on all these questions was fundamentally different from that of the skilled workers, were found siding with the Government, and urging their members to remain at work, and "carry on", when strikes broke out or were threatened. Dilution meant, for the less skilled, increased opportunities for higher earnings and an improved status in industry. Sympathy for the claims of skilled men for exemption from military service was hardly to be expected from classes upon which the claims of the army fell all the more heavily because of the exemptions. "Payment by results" had, for the less skilled, no such threatening aspect as for the skilled workers, because the former had no corresponding valuable Trade Union regulations to be menaced by it, and it seemed therefore to promise higher earning without loss or sacrifice. Moreover, it is, generally speaking, far easier to lay down approximately equitable piece-work prices for semi-skilled repetitive machine operations than for fully skilled work.'[1]

These differences were increasingly dissolved by the development of the Shop Stewards' Movement, the disappearance of the military service issue with the ending of the war, and the increased capacity for common action which resulted from the 1917 Trade Union (Amalgamation) Act.[2] Greater unity on wage issues was achieved in 1920 and 1921.

[1] Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions* (1923), p. 205.

[2] This Act simplified amalgamation by requiring a majority of 20 per cent on a vote of 50 per cent — instead of the previous requirement of a two-thirds majority of the whole membership. Hence the development of the great general labour Unions, as well as of the A.E.U. itself.

In 1921 the employers took the initiative and proposed a succession of wage reductions, followed by an insistence on their Managerial Rights regarding the new-born A.E.U.'s claim to regulate overtime and night work, the manning of machines, and negotiation on behalf of apprentices. An unsuccessful attempt was made to isolate the A.E.U. by appealing to the 46 other Unions concerned; and the issues were uneasily shelved until March 1922. The employers were then demanding that their managerial functions should be recognized in such a way that the A.E.U. would in the future be able to act only *after* a change in workshop conditions had been made; and the Union membership, voting down their Executive Committee, refused to comply. The lockout was declared; it was virtually general, although some firms outside the Engineering Employers' Federation rejected the Federation's policy and a few inside firms resigned; and, timed as it was — with some 90,000 A.E.U. members drawing unemployment pay — it could hardly fail to end in defeat for the workers.

The consequences of this defeat, and the use to which the York Memorandum (reincorporated in the 1922 agreement) could be put, were illustrated in the Hoe strike of 1926:[1] the A.E.U.'s loss of membership made it shrink from a further showdown. Apart from the General Strike, a certain amount of activity by the Minority Movement in the years following, and a considerable number of unofficial strikes during the rearmament years — particularly the apprentices' strikes of 1937 — there has been nothing resembling a general strike movement. During the second world war there were few big strikes, apart from those of the West Scotland, Belfast, Barrow and Manchester engineering and shipbuilding apprentices' strikes of 1941: 'in these industries disputes were generally local and due to questions of interpretation of awards or local causes of discontent'[2] — particularly delay in dealing with claims.

Transport

Under 'transport' are included railway workers (other than railway shopmen and some other sections), dock workers, road haulage and road passenger sections, canal and harbour workers, seamen, and some others. Of these, the main workers for the present purpose are dockers, railwaymen and road transport workers.

(a) *Docks*

Dockers have of all sections been the most ready to strike. The chief feature of the docker's industrial background has of course been the casual nature of his work, owing, among other things, to the irregularity in the arrival of shipping. In 1920 the proportion of so-called 'permanent' dockers was given as 47 per cent (Arthur Shadwell, *The Problem of Dock Labour*), as against $22\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in 1887 (Charles Booth) and 17 per cent in 1850 (Henry Mayhew) — the first-mentioned author attributing the casual nature of the industry merely to its being 'a refuge occupation for characters too defective . . . for more regular work, which they dislike'. This feature has been aggravated by relatively high wage-rates which

[1] See p. 36.

[2] BOWLEY, *Labour Disputes in War-Time* (*Royal Economic Society Memorandum*, No. 103 (October 1945), p. 8).

have attracted an even larger reserve pool of labour than necessary, particularly in times of depression. Average earnings have therefore always been low, except in wartime, and insecurity great. The social effects have been disastrous,[1] organization difficult to maintain, and official action slow: here once again history dies hard.

From 1889, the year of the historic 'docker's tanner' strike, to 1911, a year marked by big and stormy strikes of all sections of the transport industry, the special conditions of dock labour were merely 'noticed', in the words of the Balfour Report, by a number of Royal Commissions and Committees. In 1912 the Liverpool 'clearing house' scheme, involving registration to prevent further casualization, was tried at a number of ports; but a further big strike broke out against its operation. During and after the first world war, some forty-odd Port Labour Committees were set up under the Board of Trade, and later the Ministry of Labour, but these varied very much in their effectiveness, even as regards registration[2] — despite still further recommendations on this score by the Roche Committee of 1919. The 1919 strike was followed by the Shaw Committee's Report (and award) in 1920. The Shaw Committee had recommended a guaranteed week in principle; but the Maclean Committee, set up in 1924 following a further big strike (wages having fallen below the level of the Shaw Award), had once more to insist on registration as essential even to the consideration of a guaranteed week. Progress continued to be slow: an investigation carried out on Merseyside in 1930[3] revealed that 11.5 per cent of tally-holders had no work during the whole of the 13 weeks of the inquiry; 22.2 per cent had no work during from 4 to 9 weeks; and only 32.6 per cent had even a single call-on during each week of the period. The description of the dockers' week as 'three on the hook and three on the book' was in many cases an understatement.

In 1939 the total dock labour force was 135,000, of whom a writer in the *Economist* asserted that no less than 75 per cent were casual workers;[4] but by 1945 the figure had been reduced to 73,500. Under the special conditions of war, the schemes of the Ministry of War Transport and the National Dock Labour Corporation — providing for registration, and a guaranteed week on the understanding that dockers could be transferred to the ports that needed them — seem to have worked successfully enough; although the effects on their Trade Union branch life, and consequently on the power of their Union to control them, were serious. How serious, became evident as soon as the war was over and the problem of casual labour reasserted itself as a factor in the 1945 dock strike. By 1946 the National Dock Labour Corporation once more had a 'surplus' of workers of the order of 20 per cent, although under the new Scheme this percentage was reduced as traffic increased after 1948.

Moreover the industry has suffered from a steadily ageing labour force; partly because workers have tended to drift into dock labour from other trades when

[1] See Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (Pelican edn., vol. II), p. 344f, for an early account of the social effects of casual labour among dockers.

[2] Demobilization meant a further flooding of the ports by unemployed workers. The Port of London Registration Committee of 1919 registered some 61,000 workers, of whom only 34,000 were needed daily.

[3] Hanham, *Report of Enquiry into Casual Labour in the Merseyside Area* (1930), pp. 53-4.

[4] 'Purely casual workers who tended to drift down to the docks in the off-season of their own industries' (*Economist* (September 1st, 1945)). But dock labour is casual labour in a more fundamental sense than is hop-picking.

they were hit by the depression, and partly because registration schemes have restricted the entry of young men. (The textile trades, except for silk and artificial silk — the latter being in any case an industry of comparatively recent growth — have a similar age distribution.[1]) This ageing tendency, again, was naturally aggravated during the second world war.

(b) *Railways*

Railwaymen have been less ready to strike than dockers, although in the early years of the period there were a few spectacular rail strikes. It has been said[2] that railwaymen 'in many countries are regarded by anti-labour forces as most difficult to be roused to strike or any other form of action against employers just because of their relative "respectability, achieved on the basis of comparatively high wages" '; but while in this country railwaymen have been 'respectable' — perhaps because of their security of job tenure in a trade which is to some extent hereditary — their wages have not been particularly high. The Assistant Secretary of the R.C.A. wrote in 1939 of 'the outrageously long hours and the scandalously low wages (mild terms to apply to those nineteenth-century conditions — which continued moreover right into the twentieth century), coupled with the very severe discipline, military in character' which resulted in 'many cases of victimization, some of them historic'.[3]

It is pointed out elsewhere[4] that workers are less likely to take strike action on their grievances if they live in heterogeneous rather than in homogeneous communities. Railwaymen are perhaps a case in point, since, in contrast to miners and textile workers, they live in small groups all over the country in towns and villages of every sort and size. (It is true that locomotive men tend to be concentrated in nodal rail centres; but it is also true that the few 'railway towns', like Swindon and Derby, derive their character as much from the concentration of railway engineering shops as from the big junctions and running sheds.) Moreover, railwaymen have always been liable to be moved from place to place.

The organization of railway workers has therefore presented special difficulties. It was, in addition, bitterly fought by employers, partly because of the paralysis which, it was feared, a rail strike would cause.[5] Indeed it is not surprising that the two most famous adverse legal decisions affecting Trade Unionism at the

[1] *Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance*, Part V (1932), p. 243.

[2] J. Kuczynski, *Hunger and Work* (1938), p. 74. The 'respectability' of railwaymen was amusingly illustrated by a *Times* report of December 21st, 1926. The Southern Railway was intending to change the colour of its operators' ties from red to blue (the red tie being a vestigial relic of the original danger-signal neckerchief). 'I am glad', said *The Times*' railwayman, 'that the company is doing away with the red tie, and I think most of us are. Many of the men objected to having to wear the tie and got into trouble for not doing so. You know what Moscow has done for the country. We have been insulted by people who thought we were "Reds", and during the general strike the tie caused a great deal of trouble. To some it was like a red rag to a bull.'

[3] F. W. Dalley, in Cole (ed.), *British Trade Unionism To-day* (1939), pp. 297, 304.

[4] See pp. 208-9.

[5] Lord Monkswell (*The Railways of Great Britain* (1913), p. 28) suggested that the Unions were in a strong position *vis-à-vis* the railway companies 'because a strike on their part cannot possibly be met by a lock-out on the part of their employers'. The *Gazette*, however, does not hesitate to describe the 1911 strike as having developed into a lockout.

start of the century — Taff Vale and Osborne — should have involved a railway Union. Militancy and perseverance were needed before the Unions won recognition and collective bargaining was fully established. Following the 'all grades' movement of 1906, and a strike threat in the next year, an elaborate conciliation and arbitration scheme was accepted — but without Union recognition — by all the big railways.[1] In 1911 a national strike took place because of dissatisfaction with the scheme; but the subsequent Royal Commission confirmed the railway companies in their refusal to recognize the Unions if this meant brooking any interference in matters of discipline and policy. This nearly caused a fresh strike, which was averted only by the concession that a Trade Union official might act as the men's secretary on the reconstructed Conciliation Board. In 1912 the N.U.R. — a triumph of Industrial Unionism — was established; in 1915 the railwaymen joined the Triple Alliance with the other transport workers and the miners. During the war the Government, while it controlled the railways, gave the Unions full recognition; but the end of the war meant the recurrence of the deadlock, and Union recognition and full collective bargaining were established only after a further, and famous, strike.[2]

Disciplinary and recognition questions apart, railway wages and conditions prior to 1921 — when, before the amalgamation, some 130 companies held the field — varied very widely; and the unification took months to achieve. In any case railway wages are slow to move, partly because of the relative inflexibility of railway charges and, in later years, partly because all wage negotiations are national in character.

Possibly railwaymen, because of the peculiarities of their Union organization, have been less able to insist on strike action than other organized workers. In the railway Unions there is no effective body between the local branches and the national authority — the District Councils being little more than organizing and propagandist bodies. Moreover, while miners, for example, refer important issues to a ballot vote of all members, railwaymen commonly refer them to a delegate conference (unless the executive committee has been given power to act on its own); and this means that 'the full-time officials have much more influence than among the miners, since it is easier to convince a small conference than the whole body of members, and, as the delegates largely represent groups of branches, there is no organized body of constituents to give them instructions or call them to book. The miners' delegates at National Conferences are really delegates, pledged to vote according to their constituents' wishes; the railwaymen's delegates are representatives, entitled to take their own line.'[3]

The industry's freedom from big strikes since 1919 (apart from the wage-decrease strike of 1924, and the railwaymen's participation in the general strike of 1926) is probably due not only to the comprehensiveness of the 1921 machinery, but also to a working agreement on the guaranteed week and the guaranteed day — and perhaps most important of all, on promotion. The Unions are said to have believed that tranquillity on the railways is largely due to promotion by seniority (which includes the passing of the necessary tests); 'when the railway

[1] With the exception of the North Eastern, which did in fact recognize the Unions and had separate arrangements.

[2] See pp. 127, 130, 134.

[3] Cole (ed.), *British Trade Unionism To-day* (1939), p. 294.

companies had the power of discriminating between one man and another, nearly all the strikes that arose were on this question'.[1]

To cope with wage disputes, the machinery established by the 1921 Railways Act included two wages boards: the Central Board (on which the companies and the Unions were represented) and the National Board (which also had 'consumers' ' representatives). If agreement was not reached on the former, disputes went to the latter for settlement, although its findings were not binding. That disputes went deep was shown by the tendency to refer all disputes, major and minor, to the National Board.[2] During its existence, however, the National Board put through five considerable wage reductions; Mr. Bromley, at one of its last meetings in December 1932, described it as 'an instrument charged with a kind of electricity which it is very dangerous for us to touch'.[3] In fact, the 1921 machinery broke down in the following year (1933) under the stress of wage-cutting, and a new system was set up of a Railways Staff National Council (similar to the previous Central Board) and a Railways Staff National Tribunal with an independent Chairman (chosen, failing agreement, by the Minister of Labour) and two other independent members, one chosen by each side. The companies insisted that only major disputes should be dealt with by the Tribunal, the Unions that its decision should not be binding; but in the prevailing atmosphere no major disputes have resulted in national rail strikes.

(c) *Road transport*

Motor road transport is the youngest of the transport industries, having developed strongly after — and as a result of — the first world war.

The number of 'hackney carriages' almost doubled between the end of the war and 1920, and thereafter the growth of the industry was fairly steady; road passenger motor transport not only proving a substitute for older forms of road passenger transport, and to some extent for the railways, but also developing independently. During the expansion, the existence of a large number of small and scattered employers, the antagonism of some of the large companies, and the growth of unemployment very much handicapped Trade Union activity, and organization was difficult, particularly among the employees of small firms which undertook (largely seasonal) excursion and private hire work.[4] The position was of course very different in London, where there has been one big employer (first the L.G.O.C., then the L.P.T.B.) and a large concentration of workers, and where a closed shop has now been achieved. There have in fact been major disputes with the L.P.T.B., as well as with local authorities; but the worst record of strikes seems to have lain with the private companies.[5]

Characteristic of the road passenger transport industry, wrote a member of the Association of Industrial Medical Officers in 1946, 'was the frequency with which grievances — which in any other industry would be quickly adjusted —

[1] Quoted in HILTON (ed.), *Are Trade Unions Obstructive?* (1935), p. 267.

[2] See *Economist* (January 26th, 1935).

[3] Quoted in *Labour Research Department 'White Paper' No. 47 (The National Wages Board — and After)*.

[4] See CHESTER, *Public Control of Road Passenger Transport* (1936), pp. 98-100. The operation of the Fair Wages clause of the Road and Rail Traffic Act of 1933 should perhaps have benefited passenger workers more than haulage workers; but this does not seem to have been so in practice.

[5] Not till 1940 was a J.I.C. set up for private undertakings.

led to lightning and widespread[1] strikes. Bartlett has shown that fatigue after highly skilled work results *inter alia* in extreme mental irritation. Such was the result of work as a bus driver and conductor; this suggestion was supported by the loss of men from the industry after the age of 45 years'.[2]

The haulage section of road transport — and to some extent the passenger section also — was given an added impetus after the first world war by the wholesale buying-up of ex-Army lorries by 'small men' wanting to set up on their own. In ten years the position was chaotic: in the words of evidence given before the 1930 Royal Commission on Transport, 'very grave disparity exists both as to wages and conditions throughout the industry'; 'contractors in most large centres find themselves subject to grossly unfair competition' because 'some owners undercut prices and are able to do so because they do not pay anything like the same rate of wages and recognize no restrictions as to working hours'.[3]

The 1930 Road Traffic Act attempted to restrict hours, but was widely disregarded. The 1933 Road and Rail Traffic Act insisted on the keeping of records, though the terms of this section of the Act were not, as framed, applicable to passenger workers; but even as late as 1937 a Committee reported[4] that 'during the course of our inquiry we have heard many allegations of neglect to keep in proper form the records of hours, journeys, loads, etc. . . . It has been repeatedly stated that the records are frequently falsified . . . The evidence before us shows that these limitations' (on driving hours) 'are often not observed'. The 1933 Act also required the holders of A and B licences alone (i.e. those who 'undertake the carriage of goods for hire or reward' — about 28 per cent of all licence holders under the Act, and by no means the worst offenders in respect of wages and conditions) to observe the Fair Wages Resolution; but the vagueness of this provision was exposed in a number of instances.[5]

The Road Haulage Wages (No. 2) Act of 1938 attempted to remedy the position and in particular to give workers under C licence holders some means of redress; such workers (or their Unions) were enabled to lay their complaints before the Minister of Labour, who was expected to take the matter up with the employers — failing satisfaction, it was to be referred to the Industrial Court. But there was hardly time for the legislation to have effect before the outbreak of war; and in the four years 1940-43, years of increasing labour scarcity, over

[1] Bus strikes tend to spread from garage to garage, as dock strikes spread from port to port. For example, a strike occurred at Forest Gate in January 1933, on the question of schedules. It began on a Wednesday, involving the one garage only; on Thursday two were involved; on Friday six; on Saturday nineteen; and on Sunday twenty-eight (including two tram depots). (*Busman's Punch*, No. 4 (February 1933).)

[2] Lloyd Davies, *Strikes*, *The British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, vol. III, No. 1 (January 1946), p. 49 (Proceedings of the Association of Industrial Medical Officers). The results of the experiment described in Professor Sir F. C. Bartlett's paper are noted on p. 214.

[3] Wohl and Albitreccia (*Road and Rail in 40 Countries* (1935), pp. 423, 427) make the point that road haulage workers are seldom interested in the regulations imposed for their protection: the road haulage worker 'is an employee, but only provisionally, his object being to purchase a lorry or an omnibus and to become an employer himself; he wants to learn as much as possible in the quickest possible time, and is often prepared to work longer than the regulation number of hours'. This was a feature of the early stages of the industry's development, as it has been in other industries where the cost of capital equipment is low at the start.

[4] *Report of the Committee on the Regulation of Wages and Conditions of Service in the Road Motor Transport Industry (Goods)*, *Cmd.* 5540 (1937), p. 47.

[5] See Hugh-Jones, *The State and Industrial Order*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February 1939), p. 202; also *Cmd.* 5540 (1937), p. 13.

one-fifth of the workers whose wages were inspected were found to have been underpaid. This, according to a P.E.P. Report,[1] is a much higher percentage than obtained under the Trade Boards, where it was only 3 per cent even in the depressed years 1930-34. The low degree of organization in an industry comprising so many small firms, which made blacklegging on a wide scale possible in the 1926 General Strike, has already been noted.

The first big strike of road haulage workers took place in 1947.

Building

The comparatively low percentage of building workers who have struck during the period is presumably related to (*a*) the fact that in a sheltered industry increased costs can more easily be passed on to consumers, and there may therefore be, if not 'collusion', at any rate less resistance on the part of employers to the Unions' 'restrictive practices' and wage demands;[2] (*b*) the large number of small firms in the industry, which tends to lessen — as in the clothing trade — the likelihood of big-scale collective action;[3] (*c*) the fact that the industry as a whole suffered less than other trades from the depression of the 1930s; and possibly also (*d*) the retention, until the post-1945 housing shortage forced the extension of pre-fabricated building, of old-fashioned methods of construction[4] which still gave the workers considerable scope for craftsmanship and satisfaction in work — as well as making speeding up, and the hotly-contested introduction of payment-by-results, more difficult.

Thus the traditional general grounds of discontent in the industry (the seasonality and casual nature of the work), as well as the particular irritations which developed during the second world war (concerning the adjustment of wages—e.g. the payment of the building rate rather than the civil engineering rate—and of subsistence allowances for transferred workers), have been less productive of big strikes than might otherwise have been expected. The frequency of building strikes, however, has been high — second only to that of mining strikes: but this largely reflects purely local dissatisfaction and friction. The conflicts of the various craft Unions have, of course, often given rise to demarcation disputes, although the relative importance of these has probably been exaggerated. It would also appear, from a rough calculation of days lost per striker, that building strikes over the period 1911-45 have been comparatively prolonged. This accords with observations made on the basis of American experience, that strikes tend to be most frequent and prolonged in seasonal and irregular occupa-

[1] *British Trade Unionism* (1948), p. 53.

[2] 'The building trade', complained one authority bitterly in 1917, 'from its peculiar organization, has forced up the cost of houses. It may be doubted whether any operatives do less for their wages than those engaged in building houses.' (Sir Hugh Bell, in KIRKALDY, *Industry and Finance* (*War Expedients and Reconstruction*) (1917), p. 16.)

[3] The 1935 Census of Production indicated that only 18 per cent of the workers in the industry were employed in units employing 500 persons or more — as against 68 per cent for non-factory trades generally. The degree of concentration in building and contracting (as measured by the percentage of workers in the industry who were employed by the three largest units — 2 per cent in this case), was lower than in any other industry covered. See LEAK and MAIZELS, *The Structure of British Industry*, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Parts I and II (1945).

[4] One 'very important firm of builders', according to HILTON (op. cit., p. 27) stated that 'in nine cases out of ten building employers have failed to take advantage of the greatly increased range of mechanical appliances and aids'.

tions because in such trades the ordinary penalty for striking, namely, loss of earnings, is less effective.[1]

The biggest strikes in the industry have been those of 1914 and 1924. The strike of 1914 involved some 20,000 workers and concerned the presentation of a 'Document' requiring builders to work with non-Unionists — the penalty for any breach of the agreement being a twenty-shilling fine, deductible from wages.[2] Six years later this incident was forgotten and employers were complaining, more in sorrow than in anger, that their 'conciliatory' attitude had not been reciprocated:

> 'When men will sit round a table with you one day and avail themselves of your frankness and conciliatory spirit to draw from it, in seeming fairness, all that they can get, and the next day lay their plans and conduct a campaign for your extinction, it is time to consider whether the spirit of conciliation is not being grossly abused. Surely such leaders have forgotten that the present position of Trades Unions numerically, and in freedom from strikes and lock-outs, is in the main due to the employers' spirit for true conciliation.'[3]

The 1924 strike, which involved about 100,000 workers, followed the builders' first national wage demand, and was a reply to a 'national' lockout on the refusal of Liverpool workers to accept the general agreement.[4] One of its results — apart from a limited wage increase — was the first attempt to settle the 'wet time' issue.

Clothing •

Clothing workers have been less liable to strike than workers in any other industrial group. Several points should be noted.

Most sections of the industry are more or less localized; but those sections which have been most subject to seasonality of work and trade depression — tailoring and dressmaking — are in areas which possess a great variety of other industries, and therefore of alternative employment: no less than 34 per cent of the workers in these sections were reported as concentrated in Greater London[5] in 1937. Again, the large number of small firms,[6] to say nothing of the persistence of home-work[7] (although this has of course declined in importance), makes big-

[1] Cf. DOTEN, *Waste in Industry* (1921), pp. 313-14.

[2] Text quoted in MILNE-BAILEY, *Trade Union Documents* (1929), p. 458.

[3] *Minority Report of Members of the Committee Appointed by the Joint Industrial Council of the Building Trade for the Consideration of Scientific Management and Reduction of Cost* (1920), p. 13. The whole document displays a certain naivety in its turn of phrase.

[4] For an account of the points at issue, see COPPOCK and HEUMANN, *Trade Unionism in the Building Industry*, in COLE (ed.), *British Trade Unionism To-day* (1939), p.328f.

[5] *Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population* (1937). Tailoring and dressmaking have of course developed in textile towns also.

[6] The 1935 *Census of Production* indicated that 32 per cent of the workers in the clothing industry were employed in units employing 500 persons or more, as against 50 per cent for the factory trades generally. The percentage of workers employed in the three largest units was only 6 per cent. At the other end of the scale, in heavy clothing 18 per cent of the workers worked in factories employing 10 workers or less — as against 9 per cent for all factory trades.

[7] In 1913 the Home Secretary estimated that there were at least 55,000 homeworkers employed in tailoring. (See T.U.C. *Report* (1913), pp. 88, 293.) For the persistence of homeworking, see also the *Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population* (1937), p. 72.

scale action unlikely; and Trade Union organization, except in the boot-and-shoe section where peace has prevailed since the 1895 dispute,[1] has been low. The tailoring and dressmaking sections, of course, employ a considerable proportion of juvenile — especially girl — labour. However, the tradition of sweating in the industry, which was emphasized so strongly in the Charles Booth *Survey*, has been modified by the establishment of Trade Boards. In any case, if the persistence of low wages is a potential cause of strikes, its effect on individual workers will be lessened in so far as they are not tied to the industry for life; the average length of time for which a female machinist remains in the trade being about ten years.[2]

Women in strikes

In a survey of the strike experience of workers in different industries, a special reference should be made to women workers, even though they are widely distributed industrially. Although there is no quantitative evidence here, it is clear that women — having regard to their numbers in industry — have played an important part in strike movements. True, the relative youthfulness of women workers and the other consequences of their 'mortality by marriage', as well as the hostility of the established men's Trade Unions to the organization of the exploited minority, did for a long time inhibit the large-scale organization of women,[3] but it is doubtful how far these things have restrained women from striking.

Possibly their very lack of economic opportunity and responsibility has influenced them in the opposite sense.[4] Women, wrote Barbara Drake, have never been backward in strikes: 'they are, on the contrary, more often accused by their officials of being too forward, so that they "down tools" for frivolous reasons and often drag the men after them. It is a fact that the courage and loyalty of unorganized women in supporting organized men have been among the principal factors in deciding the latter to organize them'.[5] The authoress had in mind, of course, the great women's strike movements of the late 1880s and of 1911-13, which opened and closed the sweated trade agitation.[6] The more recent instances may be cited.

[1] There has been organization in the boot-and-shoe industry from early times: the Guild of Cordwainers was one of the earliest of medieval craft guilds; and the Amalgamated Society of Cordwainers dated from the eighteenth century. This Society was reformed in 1862 and 1874, when it took the name of the Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoe Makers — the men in the machine section of the trade splitting off to form a Union that eventually became the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives.

[2] *Heavy Clothing Working Party Report* (1947), p. 63.

[3] There was of course some organization among women early on in the nineteenth century; the G.N.C.T.U. included women's lodges; and the Ancient Virgins participated in the Oldham rioting of 1834. But generally speaking, even since the 'break-through' by Emma Paterson and Mary Macarthur, the degree of women's organization has been relatively low, except in cotton.

[4] SARGANT FLORENCE has suggested (in *The Statistical Method in Economics and Political Science* (1929), p. 41, and elsewhere) that the *diversity* of the economic responsibilities of women workers has made them less stable, collectively, than men. He pointed out that there were probably as many girls industrially employed who lived with their parents and did not need full 'keep', as there were women trying to keep themselves and support dependants.

[5] *Women in Trade Unions* (1921), p. 201; see also HUTCHINS, *Women in Modern Industry* (1915), p. 136; and HAMILTON, *Women at Work* (1941), p. 43f.

[6] The story of the Bryant and May strike, and its guidance by feminist leaders, has often been told. The solidarity of the girls was able to withstand threats of importing Glasgow

In 1911, it was the transport workers who set the women going; in Bermondsey almost every factory employing women was emptied, fifteen thousand women coming out simultaneously. The strike affected many of the sweated trades — jam-making, confectionery, capsule-making, tin box-making, cocoa and so on; a strike of L.C.C. charwomen followed; and a hollow-ware workers' strike in 1912. In 1913 the movement was set off by women: 'the outbreak, which swept like a prairie fire through the Midlands, commenced with girls at Dudley who said they could no longer live on the wages they received, and would prefer the streets'.[1]

During the first world war, strikes were 'comparatively infrequent' among women workers.[2] But women played the leading part in the big rent 'strike' in Glasgow in the autumn of 1915, which contributed to the passage of the Rent Restriction Act; and though this was not a strike proper, it was accompanied by strikes in industry when the attempt was made to deduct rent from wages. The rent strike began among some boot operatives at Govan, and was then taken up and organized by the Committee of the Women's Housing Association, which had been formed about a year previous. The tenants formed a women's strike committee, which was soon supported by local ward committees, Labour and Trade Union organizations, as well as by 'vigilance committees' of shipyard workers. The movement was said to have eventually involved some 20,000 Glasgow householders, and spread to Dundee, Paisley, Aberdeen, Rutherglen, Cambuslang, Motherwell, and even across the border to Birmingham and Letchworth.[3]

In the course of the war, out of about 1,660,000 women coming into industry, some three-quarters of a million entered the Unions; and women's strikes took place in cotton, munitions and electrical engineering (at Leeds, Barrow and elsewhere in 1916); dyeing and bleaching (Perth, 1917); engineering, aircraft and munitions (Leeds, Newport, Glasgow, Coventry and elsewhere, 1917); and as the war proceeded — particularly in 1917-18 — a widespread series of women's strikes in transport developed all over the country, at Newport, Brighton, Rawtenstall and Wallasey, Bradford, Liverpool and eventually in London. This London strike of women bus and tram workers was, wrote *The Times* severely on August 20th, 1918, 'infinitely worse in its effect on the public mind and temper than the most successful air raid'; it spread to Bath, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Folkstone, Hastings, Swansea and Weston-super-Mare.[4]

Women in other trades displayed a like militancy. 'Hats off, boys!' commanded a *Strike Bulletin* of the 40-Hours Movement (of shipbuilders and others) on

[1] ASKWITH, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 73.

[2] ANDREWS, *Economic Effects of the World War upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (1921 edn.), p. 93.

[3] An account of this movement was given in *Labour Monthly* (August 1940). BERYL STANLEY, *Women in Unrest*, 1914-18.)

[4] These widespread — and generally successful — women's strikes in transport were mainly concerned with equal pay and equal war bonuses. The men's Unions were sometimes drawn in; in a strike of women carriage cleaners at Old Oak Common in April 1916, the N.U.R. Executive was impelled to demand a war bonus for women.

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workers, and even of the bodily removal of the factory to Norway: 'the great success of the movement', said the secretary of the Women's Trade Union League, was 'due to the discipline, unity and steadiness of the girls themselves.' The resulting Trade Union (the 'Society of Matchmakers') survived until 1903.

February 2nd, 1919. 'The working class women have proved themselves heroines in the fight! . . . Whether as pickets, strikers, or counsellors, women have given sterling service, and have shown a rebel spirit which has sustained all of us in the darkest hours of the struggle . . . Never from one of them has come a grumble against the hardships of the strikes.' Women were also conspicuous in the great textile strikes at the turn of the 1920s and in the depression years which followed.[1] 'The effort made by the union was notable', ran the General Council's Report to the 1932 Trades Union Congress concerning an anti-Bedaux strike of Leicester hosiery workers, 'for the remarkable solidarity displayed by the employees, the majority of whom were girls. The General Council feel that the wonderful loyalty displayed is a tribute to the union and the employees concerned.'[2]

An American writer quotes a parallel tribute to women's militancy: 'although it is true of many unions that they were conceived through a strike, it is particularly true of women's organizations . . . No form of union activity lends itself so quickly to capturing the imagination of women workers as the strike.'[3]

APPENDIX A

Method of constructing tables on pp. 162-3.

Over each period, the total of working days lost, etc., was divided by the total of the yearly figures of workers in employment. The six-monthly period January-June 1945 was given the same weight as a full year.

The figures of workers in employment were obtained as follows. Figures of operatives in work were taken from the Occupation Tables of the 1931 Censuses (1926 Northern Ireland) and corrected for the fact that the Census was taken in April. (The Occupation Tables were preferred here since strikes tend to affect workers in a given occupation rather than workers of different occupations, even though they are employed in a single industry.) Figures for the years 1923 to 1939 were obtained by scaling the figures of insured workers in employment (*Labour Gazette*) to this corrected Census figure.[4] (Figures of insured workers in employment had been obtained by subtracting the average monthly number of unemployed from the July figure of insured workers.) Figures for the years 1911 to 1922 were estimated from previous Censuses, the summarized Z.8 Returns and other sources. From 1940 to 1945 the figures were based on the Ministry of Labour returns and the Statistical Digests and linked to the previous series.

[1] See, for example, JOAN BEAUCHAMP, *Women Who Work* (1937), pp. 102-3.

[2] T.U.C. *Report* (1932), p. 84.

[3] HILLER, *The Strike* (1928), p. 31. References are often found to the militancy of women in other countries: e.g. the famous strike of Paris *midinettes* in 1917, which involved workers in electrical engineering, banks and restaurants (*Economist*, June 2nd, 1917); the 1926 strike of domestic workers in China (WEI LIN, *Chinese Labour Disputes Since* 1919, Nanking, 1932); and so on. Least of all have Russian women anything to learn about combined action. Russia, wrote the *Sunday Worker* (March 22nd, 1925), 'is the only country where women have real equality with men . . . Sometimes the housewives, realizing that unity is strength, subject recalcitrant husbands to mass hen-pecking' (!)

[4] For transport, the figures of insured workers in employment were taken as characteristic of non-railway transport workers only (since most railway workers fell outside the unemployment insurance scheme). These figures were therefore corrected by a proportionate addition of railway employees on the basis of information from the Railways (Staff) Returns.

APPENDIX B

Industrial mobility (p. 163).

During the inter-war years, the mobility of miners and textile workers — at any rate beyond the confines of their own industries — seems to have been low (see the Ministry of Labour's special studies: *Report on an Investigation into the Employment and Insurance History of a Sample of Persons Insured against Unemployment in Great Britain*, 1927; and *Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance*, Part V, 1932). Although in a later and more ambitious attempt to estimate industrial mobility from 1926 to 1931 (Makower, Marschak and Robinson, *Studies in Mobility of Labour; Analysis for Great Britain*, Part II, *Oxford Economic Papers*, September 1940), transferences out of mining and cotton textiles appear relatively high, it must be remembered that these were estimates of *net* transferences-out (i.e. including transferences-in); and the apparent extent of transference-out would have been exaggerated, because transferences-in were lower for mining and textiles than for other trades. In coal-mining from 1927 to 1937, transferences-in were little more than one-third of transferences-out (all entry into the industry was restricted from August 1927 for persons over 18, with few exceptions). The figures of 'new entrants' (i.e. the previously-uninsured) between 18 and 64 years old (i.e. other than juveniles) into both coal and cotton were lower than for any other industry from 1927 to 1931.

* * *

Section 3: Regional influences

> 'If a generalization may be allowed, it seems to me that, on the assumption that a settlement must be effected, say at 12 o'clock, with the alternative of a fight, generally perfectly useless, Scotland will settle at five minutes before the hour and make quite sure; Lancashire will settle one minute before that hour; Yorkshire will debate so long that they may by inadvertence pass the hour and have trouble; Wales will take no note of the hour and sometimes settle and sometimes not; and Ireland say that the clock is wrong, and that if it is right they will settle or not without any regard to it.'
>
> Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 190.

After considering the relative propensity to strike of different workers in the light of their industrial conditions, we must go on to ask if there are any regional peculiarities which have affected strikes. Of the many economic studies of particular regions, only one has related to industrial unrest: the Reports of the 1917 Commission of Inquiry.[1] These reports were qualitative studies; but in this section we shall attempt a rough quantitative assessment of the influences peculiar to particular regions — in so far as these can be distinguished — which have affected the propensity to strike of workers in different industries.

[1] *Cd.* 8662 (North-Eastern Area), 8663 (North-Western), 8664 (Yorkshire and East Midlands), 8665 (West Midlands), 8666 (London and South-Eastern), 8667 (South-Western), 8668 (Wales), 8669 (Scotland), and 8696 (summary of the Reports).

South Wales and North East England — a contrast

By way of introduction we shall take the example of two regions — South Wales, and the Northumberland and Durham area — to illustrate the kind of influences at work. These regions are selected because (*a*) their industrial structures — that is, the distribution of workers between industries — are more alike than those of any other two regions, and (*b*) each contains a similar proportion of the country's industrial population. Each contains a high proportion of coal-miners — the readiest of all workers to strike. In 1931, 18.1 per cent of the country's miners were concentrated in South Wales, and 17.4 per cent in Northumberland and Durham.[1] But the strike-histories of the workers in these areas, and especially of the miners, have been very different.

In South Wales, nearly one-third of the occupied population are engaged in coal-mining — the biggest proportion for any single industrial group in any region — and, as will appear, the share of the miners in the striking which took place in the region is disproportionately great. The Cambrian Combine strikes of 1910-11, the militancy of South Wales miners during the first world war (when South Wales held a strategic position, as supplying coal for the Royal Navy and the merchant navy), the leading part played by South Wales in the national strikes of 1912, 1921 and 1926, and innumerable other pit and district strikes during the period — these disturbances could not fail to affect workers in other industries in this close-knit region; but it is the mining industry which has been characterized by the bitterest and most unremitting class-hatred on both sides. In Cole's words,[2]

> 'The South Wales miners are admittedly not easy people to deal with, and it is probable that the trouble [during the first world war] was accentuated by a good deal of pigheadedness on both sides. This seems to be evidenced by the fact that in the other coalfields of the country adjustments of wages were made with comparatively little difficulty during the very period when the South Wales coalfield was in a state of permanent unrest . . . All these changes were made without any stoppage of work, or serious threat of stoppage. These facts seem to indicate that there was a marked difference in the attitude of the owners in South Wales and in the other areas of the coalfields.'

Welsh miners, of course, have had a stormy history from the days of the Industrial Revolution. The historical background is one of a steady immigration of dispossessed and embittered men from the depressed agricultural areas of Somerset, Gloucestershire, Hereford and Devon, as well as from Ireland; of a tradition of violent repression met with counter-violence;[3] of colliery disasters and industrial disease unparalleled; and of long and bitter strikes. The very thorough Report of the 1917 Commission, which was presented 'with complete unanimity' and 'without any individual reservation or qualification whatsoever', analysed many of the historic factors which contributed to the prevailing unrest. In South Wales, owing to the concentration of heavy industry, the war produced less economic dislocation than in other parts of the country, and thus many of

[1] 1931 Census, Industry Tables.
[2] *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry* (1923), p. 48.
[3] See NESS EDWARDS, *The History of the South Wales Miners* (1926), ch II.

the conditions noted by the Commissioners were of a permanent or 'normal' character. The Report is thus worth quoting in some detail.

Coal mining has been the main industry ever since the virtues of Welsh steam coal were recognized at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century; moreover, the high price which Welsh coal was able to command was felt to justify the workers in claiming a high wage.[1] The geology of the area, and the composition of the coal, are exceptional:

> 'Geologically, the strata are more disturbed than those of any other British coalfield . . . In the anthracite area this disturbed condition is generally so serious as to render it difficult to work the coal on a very large scale, that is in pits employing anything approaching the number of men employed in the steam coal collieries. It also renders operations in this area more speculative and the adoption of standardized rates of wages more difficult than elsewhere. . . .'[2]

For the rest,

> 'The same causes which have given Welsh coals their superiority are also responsible for having made mining in this coalfield more costly and dangerous than in the other coalfields of the United Kingdom. The Welsh coal is dry and fiery, and owing to the dryness of most of the mines the fine coal dust is a constant source of danger. Loose jointed coal and loose or rotten roof are also more frequent in South Wales than elsewhere, so that there are numerous accidents, frequently fatal, from falls of the face of coal, as well as from falls of the roof. Most of the collieries are also worked on a large scale . . . consequently when explosions or floods occur a much larger death-roll usually ensues.'[3]

The death roll from South Wales mining disasters from 1851 to 1910 was 35 per cent of that of the whole country; from 1911 to 1923 it was 62 per cent;[4] and it has been disproportionately high even in later years when such disasters have been rarer. With such a background, men's memories are long. While one would not expect to find a close relation between accident and strike statistics, Collis and Greenwood have suggested, in order 'to support the view that the reasons given for trade disputes are incomplete', that some connexion has existed. They pointed out that the percentage of voters in favour of a strike in the ballot of August 1920 was highest in such coalfields as Lancashire and South Wales where the rate of fatal accidents had been highest, and lowest in coalfields such as Nottingham, Derbyshire, Durham and Northumberland where it had been lowest: 'any community subjected to an unduly high accident rate may be expected to suffer unduly from psycho-neuroses, just as do soldiers in war-time.'[5]

In South Wales the position was often aggravated by the employers' attitude. The 1917 Commissioners noted that:

[1] *Cd.* 8668, p. 21. [2] Op. cit., p. 5. [3] Ibid.

[4] The Senghenydd disaster of 1913, at the peak of the industry's expansion, was one of the worst in its history.

[5] *The Health of the Industrial Worker* (1921), pp. 75-6. Yorkshire did not fit into the pattern, but a strike had affected this area alone in the year previous (1919), and 'the effect of the rest then taken is generally thought to have influenced the voting'.

> 'much trouble has arisen in several collieries in South Wales during recent years owing to the men insisting on leaving the mines when a fatal accident has occurred, and legal proceedings have been instituted against the men for so doing. We are convinced that the feeling of the miners in this matter is very deep-seated, and that any attempt to suppress the practice by resort to legal machinery can have the effect only of irritating the men without achieving any good result.'[1]

In February 1919, for instance, 7000 miners in the Amman Valley struck for the refunding of fines to men who had been penalized for 'illegal absence' at a funeral; and the attempt to regularize the position by agreement[2] does not seem to have been altogether successful.

But while the exceptional physical character of the area has resulted in exceptionally bad working conditions, its influence is wider than this. The narrow and steep-sided valleys, so narrow in places that there is hardly room for road and railway to run beside the river itself, together with the continual encroachment of colliery surface-workings and by-product plants, have resulted in an intense congestion of population. Thus it is noteworthy, though not surprising, to find, that

> 'the districts which have suffered most from labour disputes in recent years are those where the population is most congested. Thus the prolonged strike of the "Cambrian Combine" miners in 1910-1911 was in the Tonypandy District. Disputes have been frequent also in the Porth District.'[3]

In such circumstances the monotony of the endless terraces of dwelling houses, the relative absence of municipal centres and public libraries,[4] the scarcity of recreation grounds and open-air playgrounds, the dearth of ground available for gardens and allotments, have all contributed to an attitude towards working life which is somewhat ungenerously described in the Report as a retardation of 'the development of the civic spirit and the sense of social solidarity — what we may in short call the community sense'.[5] The Welsh miner's community sense is surely evidenced by the place of the chapel and the miners' lodge in his social life; but his sense of solidarity has, on the whole, been restricted to his fellows, and has excluded those who have been judged instrumental in contributing to his sufferings.

[1] *Cd.* 8668, p. 40.

[2] This was done in 1910, and again in 1931. A clause in the agreement of February 9th, 1931, between the South Wales Coalowners' Association and the S.W.M.F. read: 'No stoppage for funerals shall take place except by arrangement with the management. Upon application by a workman for leave to absent himself from work to attend a funeral the management shall take such application into consideration and shall not unreasonably withhold consent'; and in serious but non-fatal accidents an agreed number of men (not more than 20) might accompany the injured man out of the pit. Significantly, however, no such clause seems to have been included in other District Agreements concluded by 1934. (See *Report on Collective Agreements Between Employers and Workpeople* (1934), vol. I, p. 70; and the corresponding Report for 1910, p. 48.)

[3] *Cd.* 8668, p. 14.

[4] As late as 1915 there was not one municipally-maintained public library in the central Glamorgan area; it was only on the seaboard and in the older towns of Merthyr, Aberdare and Pontypridd that any existed. Nor was there a single Trade Union or Co-operative hall for large gatherings. Nor was there any theatre in the Rhondda, although there were many cinemas and music-halls.

[5] *Cd.* 8668, p. 12.

The Commissioners discussed other relevant factors: the 'racial'[1] characteristics of the Welsh miners, the extent of immigration and speed of assimilation; the exceptional industrial development which followed the recognition of the high quality of the coal — a development which made even the very rapid growth of population 'quite insufficient from the colliery proprietor's point of view', although (from the worker's point of view) housing conditions deteriorated drastically in consequence; the lateness of this development,[2] which in its turn produced a lag in the development of working-class organizations, as well as of education;[3] the low proportion of women to men, many immigrants naturally being unmarried (this was held to contribute to a 'tendency to rash and impulsive action', since there were disproportionate numbers of men without family responsibilities); and so on.

In all these circumstances it is hardly surprising to read of 'the revolution which has taken place in the minds of the workers':

> 'Whilst in the old days the road to reform appeared to lie in the direction merely of the consolidating and care of local interests, of late the workers have both widened and narrowed their outlook. Improvement of status, rises in wages, have all proved ineffective against the more obvious pressure of capitalist economy and the patent gambling in the necessities of life.'[4]

The sponsoring of the original Central Labour College by the S.W.M.F. and the N.U.R.; the hold of the Industrial Democracy League and the Miners' Unofficial Reform Committee[5] in the area; the fact that 'economics is often degraded into a gross materialistic conception of cause and effect, and the essential spirituality of education is neglected or forgotten' — all these were scarcely-distorted reflections of the brute facts of existence. When the war came, recruiting to the forces — from patriotic and perhaps also from 'escapist' motives — was very strong from South Wales; and the Commissioners were firm in their rebuttal of the wild charges of 'pro-German influences' behind the 1915 mining strikes. On the contrary, they said, the strikes were mainly due to the suspicion that employers were exploiting the national crisis for personal gain; and they summed up with the observation that 'between the employer and the worker a great gulf is fixed'. The gulf was perceptibly wider and deeper than in other regions.

Before coal-mining came to dominate South Wales, the metal industries, mainly around Swansea, held first place. Copper smelting dated from Queen Elizabeth's day, and its revival at the beginning of the eighteenth century,

[1] The term 'racial' was used 'to indicate characteristics associated with different counties or provinces of the United Kingdom rather than with distinct races of people'; but the Report quotes a colourful description of 'the typical collier and "Eisteddfodwr", impulsive and wayward, but susceptible to the influences of music and religion' — the 'Iberian' type.

[2] Because the industry expanded late, it was soon highly centralized. Even in 1917 three coal combines were responsible for more than 40 per cent of the total coal output; and, of course, the tendency towards centralization continued.

[3] In this connexion, the Commissioners pointed the contrast between South Wales and Northumberland and Durham.

[4] *Cd.* 8668, p. 18.

[5] Numerous 'satellite organizations' and groupings were run by the Syndicalists: for instance, the various 'amalgamation committees' which were related to Tom Mann's Industrial Syndicalist Education League.

together with the establishment of iron-working (the Dowlais works were set up in 1760), inaugurated the large-scale industrialization of the area. While the pig-iron section declined in face of competition from other areas better placed to use new techniques, the steel and tinplate sections developed strongly and in a highly-localized fashion. Iron, steel and tinplate concerns have been vertically integrated to a large extent; and in most sections organization has developed on both sides and industrial relations have been generally good. (In this respect Wales does not differ from other regions.) As early as the first world war the Welsh Plate and Steel Manufacturers' Association comprised about 97 per cent of the whole trade, while 99 per cent of the workers were organized. The history of the tinplate trade after the setting-up of the Conciliation Board in 1899 provides an example of very successful collective bargaining 'under difficulties so great that at first they appear to be almost insuperable':

> 'The average tinplate worker is highly intelligent and a keen politician. Many of his class read widely, and are enthusiastic book collectors . . . they possess a capacity for organization and construction which has not yet been fully recognized. It is to the combination of imaginative and constructive powers . . . that the sustained success of the present method of collective bargaining is probably due.'[1]

The localization of the industry was moreover an asset in this respect; for the precise conditions obtaining in the factories were known to most members of the Conciliation Board; and 'most of the captains of industry (unlike those of the coal industry) lived near their works and were in almost daily contact with their men.'

In the ship-repairing industry, however, which developed strongly before 1914 at Cardiff and Newport, although the employers were well organized, the workers were not, and in consequence industrial relations were bad.

Overland transport in South Wales also has marked peculiarities. The railways were designed to get coal from pit to port rather than to open up the region; west to east communication was developed only at one or two points, and the valleys were largely isolated from each other until the 1920s. (It was in fact only the availability of a large labour force of unemployed miners which enabled the trunk roads to be built across the mountains.[2]) The original multiplicity of railways made it impossible to achieve any uniformity of wages and conditions, and this proved a constant source of irritation. Moreover the Taff Vale spirit died hard; the Commissioners remarked on the continued hostility to Trade Unionism shown by some of the local companies.

The Commissioners did not interview workers outside manufacturing and transport; but, after stating that the position of black-coated workers and teachers might come to be relatively worse than that of manual workers, they pointed out that

> 'discontent among such classes is often a source of great danger for their influence with manual workers is frequently very great. Unrest is conta-

[1] *Cd.* 8668, pp. 8 and 9, quoted from J. H. JONES, *The Tinplate Industry*, pp. x and xi.

[2] Cf. HUTT, *The Condition of the Working Class in Great Britain* (1933), p. 37. Road transport grew very rapidly: between 1923 and 1930 the number of bus and tram workers in South Wales increased by 73 per cent, and of other road transport workers by nearly 96 per cent — a very much higher rate than for the whole country.

> gious, and it appears to us, for example, that the hundreds of discontented insurance agents visiting thousands of homes at frequent and regular intervals may infect a large portion of the community in a comparatively short time with their own spirit of discontent.'[1]

The Report has been extensively quoted, since it stresses the connexion between the region's economic and social peculiarities and the persistent strikes. No other of the Commissioners' Reports lays so much emphasis on the deeper-seated local causes of unrest, and so little on the immediate causes of friction due to the war.

The experience of Northumberland and Durham provides a strong contrast. Coal-mining is again the main industry of the region, accounting for over a quarter of the occupied population, and there is also a concentration of ship-building workers. However, observers are unanimous in remarking on the good industrial relations which have obtained in the region; and once again the roots go back into history.

During the nine-hours agitation of 1870-75, the miners were nowhere acquiescent except in the North-East; and it is significant that, when conciliation and arbitration were first developed in the industry, it was in Durham (1872) that the first standing joint committee of owners and men was set up, and it was for the Northumberland area that the first conciliation board proper was set up (1894). (Characteristically, the last to be established was that for South Wales, in 1903.)

When the Great Depression wiped out most of the district miners' Unions, those of Northumberland and Durham survived. After joining the Miners' Federation in 1892, they were involved almost at once in a decision on the question of a national strike[2] — which they opposed. On being threatened with expulsion if they did not at least press for a wage increase, they complied, but made it quite clear that they would not strike. It is true that after the eight-hours Act of 1908 there were considerable strikes against the three-shift system, and a Durham Miners' Forward Movement challenged the official leadership. But in the general upsurge which followed, the North-East lagged once more: in the strike votes of 1912 and 1920, the percentages of Northumberland and Durham miners favouring strike action were among the lowest.[3] 'Speaking generally', wrote the Commissioners in 1917, 'there is no unrest among the mining community'; and they repeatedly drew attention to the almost idyllic relations of employers and workers:

> 'we are satisfied from our inquiries that so far as employers on the North-East Coast are concerned, the idea of exploitation is foreign to their minds . . . the employers express their appreciation of the Unions generally, and desire to see the efficiency of these Unions maintained in the best interests of industry. If the North-East Coast were wholly independent of other fields of industry it might well be left to employers and employed to settle

[1] *Cd.* 8668, p. 41.
[2] See *Labour Gazette* (August 1893), p. 84, and following reports.
[3] 1912 figures: D. H. Robertson, *Narrative of the Coal Strike*, *Economic Journal* (September 1912). 1920 figures: I.L.O. *Reports*, Series A (1920-21), No. 13.

> by themselves any differences which might arise . . . On the whole, we formed the opinion that unrest arising from delay in settlement of disputes is less evident in the North-East area than it seems to be in other districts . . . We may again repeat that the past experience of the advantages of the Trade Unions in adjusting labour difficulties and bringing about good relations between employers and employed on the North-East Coast, convinces us that nothing ought to be done to interfere with the usefulness of the Unions . . . The employees collectively do not advance any demands that are extravagant, or incapable of being met by friendly co-operation between Employer and Employee.'[1]

and so on.

In 1920, at the peak of the post-war strike wave, the 'Anti-Strike Feeling in Durham', as evidenced in the miners' ballot, was featured in *The Times*: 'probably what prompted their determination to have no strike was largely a sense of expediency and the local characteristic of caution. The Durham miner is a wholly different being from the miner in, say, the South Wales coalfield, to quote a district in which a large majority has favoured a strike. People born and bred in this county are not readily stirred by emotion. They are neither flexible nor reckless; rather they are impatient of change.'[2] This was attributed to the immobility of the Durham miner, even as between collieries; to relatively good housing (?); to the fact that in this area boys under eighteen were not allowed to vote on strike action (some miners even recommended that no one should vote who was not either a householder or of age); and to strong Nonconformist influence.

When this region, because of its dependence on mining and shipbuilding, suffered the heaviest burden of unemployment in the country during a depression which murdered, in Ellen Wilkinson's phrase, whole towns such as Jarrow, its workers maintained their tradition of long-suffering and forbearance to the last. The Pilgrim Trust Report[3] again pointed the contrast with South Wales:

> 'The Durham miner has a less erratic temperament than the Welshman. Though the quality of family life was noteworthy in the Rhondda, in Crook [the Durham village in which the inquiry was centred] it seemed even higher . . . And though a rather higher percentage of households in Crook

[1] *Cd.* 8662, pp. 7-10. Railwaymen in the region, however, have shown considerable militancy on occasion. While the old North Eastern Railway company was the first big company to recognize the railway Unions, its employees were particularly prone to strike: 'whether owing to the North country character, or for some other reason, the North Eastern has been somewhat liable to strikes on the part of its servants, and — apart from the great strike of 1911 — once or twice a cessation of work has taken place so sudden and so complete that Newcastle has become on the instant like a beleaguered city' (Monkswell, *The Railways of Great Britain* (1913), p. 37).

[2] *The Times* (September 1st, 1920). It has often been said that the men of the North-East, once they have decided to strike, show remarkable staying-power, whereas Welshmen are readier to strike but also readier to go back. In 1912 85 per cent of South Wales men voted for the strike, but only 32 per cent for its continuance when a second vote was taken; while the corresponding votes for Northumberland were 75 and 56 per cent, and for Durham 67 and 66 per cent. Moreover in the second ballot there was a far higher proportion of abstentions in South Wales than elsewhere. The fact, however, that rates of Union contribution and benefit were lower in South Wales than in the North-East no doubt contributed to this.

[3] See *Men Without Work* (1938), pp. 277-8; 74-5, 81, 78.

were living in slum conditions, there was a higher proportion of well-managed households in Crook than anywhere else. There was little of the desperate poverty of Liverpool, there was more determination not to give way to unemployment and not to subsist on self-pity than there was in Wales. This is the more striking since on the whole unemployment has lasted longer here than in any other of the places visited. 71 per cent have had no work for five years or more as compared with 45 per cent in the Rhondda, 23 per cent in Liverpool, and only 3 per cent in Deptford. The Durham miner who has been out of work for five years has not a perpetual sense of grievance, but rather — though he is actually rather poorer on the whole than the unemployed man in South Wales — a determination to make the best of things. . . .'

Finally, it is not surprising to find comment on the absence of crime. This was described as one of the most remarkable features of the post-war depression, and was attributed to two circumstances: to the fact that the Northern worker is 'an aristocrat among manual workers' with a long tradition of craftsmanship and steady living, and to the 'steadying influence' of the Unions.[1]

Analysis of regional influences

Regions which are industrially similar may evidently have very different strike histories. The following analysis attempts to distinguish between two sets of influences which may affect the propensity of workers to strike: (*a*) the effect of working in a particular region, and (*b*) the effect of working in a particular trade. These can often be distinguished but never wholly separated; and even a distinction is difficult when one industry is concentrated in a single region, as for instance cotton is in Lancashire. No doubt the industrial structure of a region largely accounts for apparent peculiarities in respect of the workers' propensity to strike — in other words, it matters less where you live than what you do for a living; but there are also certain sociological factors, rooted perhaps deeper in the region than the industries themselves. These may, for example, affect the size of firms; they may produce communities of a different kind from those of workers in the same industries who live in other regions; and they may thus influence the workers' attitudes to striking.

Available data

Some countries' labour statistics provide better data for a regional analysis of strikes than do the British. In 1893 a limited picture of the regional distribution of the strikes of 1891 was given by the Board of Trade on a specially prepared map;[2] but the experiment was not repeated, and our only source is the *Labour Gazette's* monthly lists of Principal Disputes. These lists cover three quarters

[1] MUIR, *Justice in a Depressed Area* (1936), pp. 32-3. In assessing the greater relative social stability, even at a very low level of economic welfare, of coal miners in the North-East, one must remember that the reversal of fortunes in South Wales was far sharper than in Durham. In Durham the industry had been depressed even at the end of the nineteenth century, and did not experience a pre-war boom comparable to that in South Wales.

[2] *Labour Gazette* (June 1893), p. 37. The map was shaded in five degrees to illustrate the number of days lost in strikes per 100 of the population; but the information was admittedly incomplete.

of all workers involved in strikes during the period selected from January 1911 to June 1945 — i.e. to the end of the second world war.

For our purpose, however, certain exclusions must be made. We exclude (*a*) strikes involving less than 1000 workers (to get a more consistent range of classification),[1] (*b*) all widespread strikes which affected more than one region (and which therefore cannot appear in an analysis of strikes by separate regions). Strikes in this latter category include (i) general strikes, affecting workers in many industries simultaneously (i.e. the Irish general strike of 1913 and the British general strike of 1926); (ii) widespread strikes of most or all of the workers in a particular industry group (such as the big coal strikes of 1912, 1920, 1921 and 1926; (iii) widespread strikes of workers who are only a section of an industry-group (such as the 1919 railway strike, or the 1930 strike of insurance workers); (iv) smaller-scale strikes affecting a few regions only (e.g. some provincial bus strikes). Strikes in Southern Ireland, being few, are also excluded (even before Southern Ireland achieved independence). After these omissions,[2] the sample is still reasonably representative, although mining is somewhat under-represented because of the exclusion of several big and widespread strikes, and textiles is somewhat over-represented because the industry is localized and textile strikes however big seldom spread outside the region in question.

The regions are those of the Census, since these make sense to some extent industrially, and appropriate figures of industrial population are available.[3] The names adopted for these regions are:—

South Wales:	Brecknockshire, Carmarthenshire, Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire.
Northern Ireland:	(Northern Ireland).
Scotland:	(Scotland).
Lancashire and Cheshire:	(Lancashire and Cheshire).
West Riding:	West Riding, York C.B.
North and Central Wales:	Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Cardiganshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merionethshire, Montgomeryshire, Pembrokeshire, Radnorshire.
Northern Rural Belt:	Cumberland, Westmorland, North Riding and East Riding of Yorkshire.
West Midlands:	Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire.

[1] See p. 305, where the classification of 'Principal Disputes' is discussed.

[2] Strikers in Principal Disputes amounted to 75 per cent of all strikers; strikers in what may be called 'major strikes' (i.e. those Principal Disputes which involved 1000 workers or more) to 72 per cent; and strikers in major strikes falling within particular regions to 43 per cent.

[3] For the present purpose it was thought sufficient to make use of the Industry Tables of the 1931 Censuses (England and Wales, and Scotland), and of the 1926 Census (Northern Ireland).

London and the South East:	Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, London, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Isle of Wight.
Northumberland and Durham:	(Northumberland and Durham).
East Midlands:	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Soke of Peterborough.
Eastern Counties:	Cambridgeshire, Isle of Ely, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Rutlandshire, Suffolk.
South Western Counties:	Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Wiltshire.

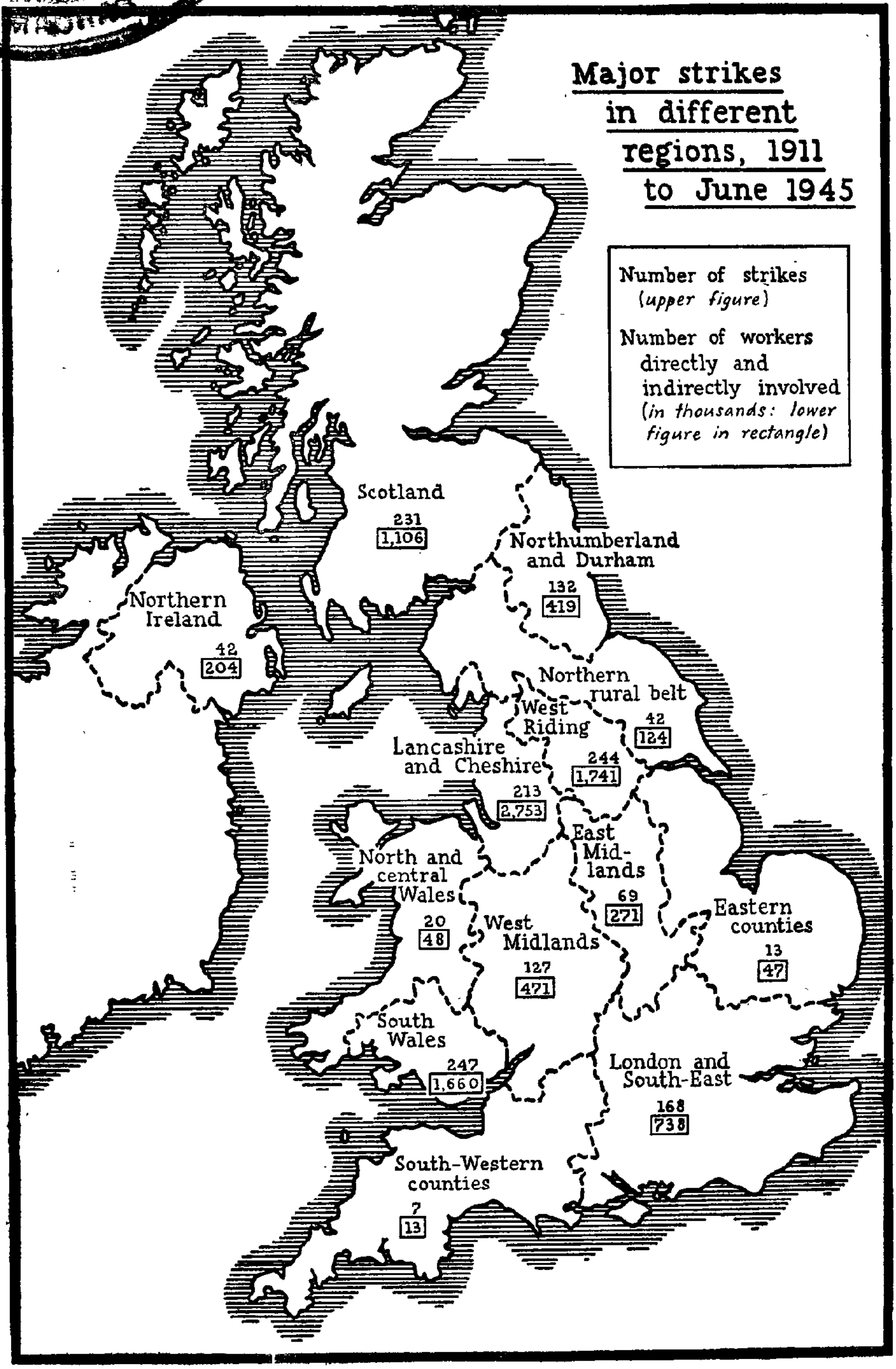
The map on the next page shows the number of these 'major strikes', and of the workers involved in them, by regions over the whole period.

Regional 'strike-proneness'

The tables which follow give an indication of what, for want of a better term, may be called the 'strike-proneness' of the workers in each region relative to that of the workers in other regions and in the country as a whole. If the percentage of strikers in each region is divided by the percentage of industrial population in that region, a ratio is obtained which can be compared with 1.0 (the figure for the U.K. as a whole, which contains 100 per cent of the strikers and 100 per cent of the industrial population). In the following tables this is done for all industries together and for the separate groups of industries. It must be strongly emphasized that the term 'strike-proneness' is intended to be quite colourless. The 'strike-proneness ratio' simply indicates the extent to which workers in one region have been involved in strikes — regardless of why they have been so involved — as compared with workers in other regions; it is a measure which in itself carries no implications. It should also be noted that this set of tables compares 'strike-proneness' in different *regions*. It is of course not possible to compare directly the ratios given in any one table of the series with those given in the other tables.[1]

[1] E.g., although one can say that South Wales miners are about twice as 'strike-prone' as Scottish miners, one cannot say that they are twice as 'strike-prone' as textile workers in North and Central Wales, or three times as 'strike-prone' as transport workers in South Wales itself. The relative 'strike-proneness' of workers in different *industries* can be seen from the next set of tables (p. 203f.) and the two sets of tables would have to be read in conjunction if one wished to compare the 'strike-proneness' of workers in different regions and industries (e.g. of South Wales miners and Eastern Counties agricultural workers). But the value of such comparisons would be small.

1 8 SEP 1954



Major strikes in different regions, 1911 to June 1945
Number of strikes (upper figure)
Number of workers directly and indirectly involved (in thousands: lower figure in rectangle)
Scotland
231
1,106
Northumberland and Durham
132
419
Northern Ireland
42
204
Northern rural belt
42
124
West Riding
244
1,741
Lancashire and Cheshire
213
2,753
East Midlands
69
271
North and central Wales
20
48
West Midlands
127
471
Eastern counties
13
47
South Wales
247
1,660
London and South-East
168
738
South-Western counties
7
13

Regional 'strike-proneness', 1911 to June 1945

		(a) Percentage of industrial population	(b) Percentage of strikers	(c) 'Strike proneness ratio' (b÷a)
A. (i)	*ALL INDUSTRIES*			
	South Wales	3.6	17.3	4.8
	West Riding	7.7	18.2	2.4
	Northern Ireland	2.6	2.1	0.8
	Lancs. and Cheshire	14.4	28.7	2.0
	Scotland	10.2	11.5	1.1
	N. and Central Wales	1.4	0.5	0.4
	N. Rural Belt	2.6	1.3	0.5
	West Midlands	10.0	4.9	0.5
	N'land and Durham	4.3	4.4	1.0
	London and S.E.	30.0	7.7	0.3
	East Midlands	5.3	2.8	0.5
	Eastern Counties	3.7	0.5	0.1
	S.W. Counties	4.2	0.1	<0.1
	All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

These ratios are obviously influenced by the regional distribution of particularly 'strike-prone' industries such as coal-mining and textiles. They should eventually be compared with the standardized ratios given at the end of this section.

The same measure of regional 'strike-proneness' may now be applied within the separate industries.

		Percentage of industrial population	Percentage of strikers	'Strike proneness ratio'
A. (ii)	*MINING AND QUARRYING*			
	South Wales	18.1	37.2	2.1
	West Riding	15.5	30.5	2.0
	Northern Ireland	0.2	—	0.0
	Lancs. and Cheshire	8.4	3.0	0.4
	Scotland	10.9	11.4	1.0
	N. and Central Wales	2.6	0.7	0.3
	N. Rural Belt	2.1	1.4	0.7
	West Midlands	8.4	3.2	0.4
	N'land and Durham	17.4	7.5	0.4
	London and S.E.	2.6	0.6	0.2
	East Midlands	11.6	4.4	0.4
	Eastern Counties	0.4	—	0.0
	S.W. Counties	1.8	0.1	0.1
	All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

South Wales, and Northumberland and Durham, have been discussed above. The militancy of Yorkshire and Scottish miners has developed strongly in recent years. In Lancashire and Cheshire, a substantial proportion of miners live in the industrial towns, mingled with the workers employed in other industries — which may perhaps have reduced their propensity to strike. In the East Midlands, labour relations have been judged to be 'traditionally better than in most mining areas';[1] it is noteworthy that Spencer Unionism won its foothold

[1] See special article in *The Times* (August 7th, 1947). Most of the strikes in this region were strikes of Nottinghamshire miners, mainly in the Mansfield area.

here after 1926. The coalfields centred in the East Midlands are the most highly productive in the country — by contrast with those of the West Midlands. The West Midlands coalfield, however, supplies a large number of miscellaneous metal industries, and has thus not had to depend — as has South Wales — on its foreign trade. Moreover, the Midlands coalfields generally are within reach of areas where newer industries have been expanding, and the opportunities of alternative employment must have mitigated some of the effects of the inter-war mining depression.

Needless to say, almost all the strikes in the 'mining and quarrying' group are strikes of coal miners, although there have been a few big strikes of quarrymen.[1] Thus in London and the South-East, where barely a quarter of the workers in this group were coal-miners working in the relatively modern Kentish coalfield, 'strike-proneness' was low. In North and Central Wales, where 'strike-proneness' was also low, not more than half these workers were coal-miners; in the South-Western Counties about a fifth, in the Eastern Counties about a seventh, and in Northern Ireland the proportion was negligible.[2]

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
A. (iii)	*TEXTILES*			
	South Wales	0.1	<0.1	<0.1
	West Riding	19.5	12.1	0.6
	Northern Ireland	7.3	0.9	0.1
	Lancs. and Cheshire	43.0	77.4	1.8
	Scotland	10.6	7.1	0.7
	N. and Central Wales	0.4	0.4	1.0
	N. Rural Belt	0.5	—	0.0
	West Midlands	3.6	0.4	0.1
	N'land and Durham	0.2	—	0.0
	London and S.E.	2.9	0.3	0.1
	East Midlands	10.7	1.4	0.1
	Eastern Counties	0.5	—	0.0
	S.W. Counties	0.7	<0.1	<0.1
	All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

Nearly 90 per cent of all U.K. cotton workers live in Lancashire and Cheshire; and these comprise 82 per cent of all textile workers in the region (not counting process workers). The wool textile industry is even more concentrated in the West Riding. Thus the high 'strike-proneness' of Lancashire and Cheshire compared with the West Riding reflects the fact that it is mainly the cotton section which has been involved in strikes.

In North Wales, it has been the workers in artificial silk who have been responsible for the big textile strikes.

In Northern Ireland, the textile industry, which employs more workers than any other single group, has been largely free from strikes. The industry is, of course, more closely connected with agriculture than elsewhere. Moreover, mechanization came late to Northern Ireland: 'the vast expansion of the [linen] trade during the eighteenth century was achieved entirely without mechanical

[1] For example: Yorkshire (stone) and Cornwall (china clay), 1913; West Riding (stone), 1921; North Wales (slate), 1922; North Wales (stone), 1924; Cornwall (granite), 1929; North Wales (slate), 1929.

[2] No coal-miners were recorded as working in Northern Ireland from 1928 to 1933.

power, and although power looms began to appear from 1850 onwards, hand-loom weavers remained an important section of the linen operatives until the War.'[1]

	Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
A. (iv) *METAL, ENGINEERING, SHIPBUILDING, ETC.*			
South Wales	3.8	8.5	2.2
West Riding	9.2	7.7	0.8
Northern Ireland	1.5	10.2	6.8
Lancs. and Cheshire	13.3	15.9	1.2
Scotland	11.2	20.2	1.8
N. and Central Wales	0.6	0.2	0.3
N. Rural Belt	2.7	1.2	0.4
West Midlands	21.5	18.1	0.8
N'land and Durham	6.0	7.7	1.3
London and S.E.	21.2	8.0	0.4
East Midlands	4.1	1.6	0.4
Eastern Counties	2.4	0.7	0.3
S.W. Counties	2.5	—	0.0
All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

In this group it has been the shipbuilding workers — as has already been noted — who have struck the most, in proportion to their numbers.[2] In view of the inter-war depression in shipbuilding, however, it is not surprising that the biggest strikes took place during, or in the years closely preceding or following, the two wars. Thus in Scotland the big strikes of shipbuilders took place before 1921 or after 1936; and the large proportion of strikers in this group in Northern Ireland[3] is mainly accounted for by two very large shipbuilders' strikes of January 1919 and April 1944, which involved 50,000 and 20,000 workers respectively.

In the West Midlands, the centre of the engineering industry, most of the big strikes were also associated with the wartime expansion of these trades.

[1] Stamp and Beaver, *The British Isles* (1937 edn.), p. 508.

[2] *Relative 'strike-proneness' of different sections of the metal, engineering and shipbuilding group*, 1923 *to June* 1945

	Percentage of insured workers	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
Metal manufacture and metal trades:	36.6	21.4	0.6
Engineering and construction and repair of vehicles:	55.3	53.6	1.0
Shipbuilding and ship-repairing:	8.1	25.0	3.1
All sections:	100.0	100.0	1.0

(The years 1936 and 1937 have had to be omitted from this calculation, since the *Gazette* did not give the appropriate breakdown of strikers in these years. Yearly figures of insured population, allocated between the 3 sections (due allowance being made for the change in insurance after 1927, when the over-64s ceased to be insurable), were preferred to the 1931 Census figures used elsewhere. All strikes, and not merely 'major strikes', were taken. The 'strike-proneness ratios' refer of course to the 3 sections *within the group only*.)

[3] The *number of separate 'major strikes'* in Northern Ireland in engineering, however, outnumbered those in shipbuilding by 13 to 9. Some smaller strikes involved workers in both sections.

A. (v) *TRANSPORT*	*Percentage of industrial population*	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
South Wales	4.8	3.4	0.7
West Riding	5.9	3.6	0.6
Northern Ireland	1.5	1.1	0.7
Lancs. and Cheshire	16.2	23.0	1.4
Scotland	10.6	9.9	0.9
N. and Central Wales	1.3	—	0.0
N. Rural Belt	3.7	4.9	1.3
West Midlands	7.6	2.3	0.3
N'land and Durham	4.5	0.6	0.1
London and S.E.	32.8	50.7	1.5
East Midlands	4.2	—	0.0
Eastern Counties	3.3	0.5	0.2
S.W. Counties	3.6	—	0.0
All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

In the transport group,[1] as has been said, dockers have struck most in proportion to their numbers. Nine of the regions contain harbours and docks, and in eight of these[2] dockers have comprised the absolute majority — usually an overwhelming majority — of strikers in the industry. Road passenger workers, being numerous and well-organized in London and the South-East, have run them close in this region.[3]

A. (vi) *BUILDING*	*Percentage of industrial population*	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike proneness ratio'*
South Wales	2.2	5.5	2.5
West Riding	5.5	0.6	0.1
Northern Ireland	2.0	1.4	0.7
Lancs. and Cheshire	11.2	13.2	1.2
Scotland	8.9	18.2	2.0
N. and Central Wales	1.4	3.3	2.4
N. Rural Belt	2.3	0.9	0.4
West Midlands	9.6	5.4	0.6
N'land and Durham	3.1	0.8	0.3
London and S.E.	40.3	40.4	1.0
East Midlands	4.5	1.5	0.3
Eastern Counties	3.5	5.5	1.6
S.W. Counties	5.5	3.3	0.6
All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

Since big building strikes are rare, the 'strike-proneness ratios', even over so long a period, tend to be misleading. Although in fact there were more major strikes in building than in clothing, the building strikes were less evenly distributed geographically; and in no less than eight of the thirteen regions the level

[1] It may be noted that the proportion of *separate transport strikes* has been highest in those regions which contain the highest proportion of transport workers. Thus 33 per cent of all transport strikes during the period took place in London and the South-East, 22 per cent in Lancashire and Cheshire, and 14 per cent in Scotland.

[2] The exception is Northumberland and Durham.

[3] This fact is partly also to be explained statistically, since the exclusion of widespread strikes from consideration would affect the figures for this region less than those for other regions whose boundaries coincided less exactly with the operating 'territories' of the 'bus companies.

of 'strike-proneness ratio' is determined by one or two major strikes. (In North and Central Wales, for example, the high ratio is due to two big strikes in 1939 and 1940.) It is nevertheless interesting that London and the South-East, with its concentration of building workers, carries a correspondingly high proportion of strikers.

Six very large building strikes, involving 10,000 workers or more, all took place before 1926.

A. (vii) *CLOTHING*	*Percentage of industrial population*	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
South Wales	1.3	1.0	0.8
West Riding	9.5	19.9	2.1
Northern Ireland	2.8	11.6	4.1
Lancs. and Cheshire	15.9	20.5	1.3
Scotland	5.1	2.1	0.4
N. and Central Wales	0.6	—	0.0
N. Rural Belt	1.3	0.7	0.5
West Midlands	7.6	—	0.0
N'land and Durham	1.4	—	0.0
London and S.E.	35.1	23.8	0.7
East Midlands	12.8	17.1	1.3
Eastern Counties	3.2	3.3	1.0
S.W. Counties	3.4	—	0.0
All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

London and the South-East, which has a large proportion of clothing workers of all kinds, contains many old small-scale establishments as well as the newer factories; and for this and other reasons big-scale strikes were less likely. It is in the areas of more specialized development that big strikes have taken place. Owing to the paucity of these strikes, however, the ratios are again apt to be misleading; in Northern Ireland, for example, there was only one big strike (of 17,000 shirt and collar workers, mostly 'indirectly involved', in June 1920).

A. (viii) *OTHER INDUSTRIES AND SERVICES*	*Percentage of industrial population*	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
South Wales	2.6	1.8	0.7
West Riding	5.6	6.0	1.1
Northern Ireland	2.8	1.1	0.4
Lancs. and Cheshire	12.0	19.6	1.6
Scotland	10.4	16.2	1.6
N. and Central Wales	1.6	0.7	0.4
N. Rural Belt	2.9	3.6	1.2
West Midlands	9.1	13.8	1.5
N'land and Durham	3.3	0.3	0.1
London and S.E.	36.0	30.2	0.8
East Midlands	3.9	1.5	0.4
Eastern Counties	4.7	5.2	1.1
S.W. Counties	5.1	—	0.0
All regions	100.0	100.0	1.0

Since 'other industries and services' comprise so many trades, the ratios mean little without a further breakdown. This may be given as follows:

Industry	*Number of 'major strikes'*	*Number of workers involved in these* (000)	*Regions chiefly affected*	*Regional percentage of these strikers in the industry named*
Furniture and woodworking:	19	51.1	London and S.E.:	43
			Lancs. and Cheshire:	37
Food, drink and tobacco:	17	36.5	London and S.E.:	25
			Eastern Counties:	25
Printing and paper:	12	38.8	London and S.E.:	67
Rubber:	11	48.9	West Midlands:	64
Distribution, etc.:	10	28.2	London and S.E.:	86
Co-op. employees (occupation not specified):	4	20.9	Lancs. and Cheshire:	55
			West Riding:	45
Agriculture:	5	19.3	Eastern Counties:	42
			West Midlands:	36
			Lancs. and Cheshire:	12
			Northern Rural Belt:	10

To some extent, of course, this picture reflects the regional concentration of industries. On 1931 figures of workers in *furniture and woodworking*, for example, London and the South-East came first with the highest concentration (38 per cent of all the workers in these trades), while Lancashire and Cheshire came third with 10 per cent.

In *food, drink and tobacco*, London and the South-East again came first with 32 per cent of all the workers. The Eastern Counties came sixth with only 5 per cent.

In *printing and paper*, London and the South-East came easily first with 47 per cent.

The *rubber* trades employed only about 80,000 workers all told, and the West Midlands came fourth out of six regions where these trades were carried on.

The highest concentration of *distributive* workers is of course in London and the South-East (38 per cent). While comparable figures of the regional distribution of *Co-operative employees* do not seem to be available, trading figures indicate that the movement, true to its origins, is stronger in the north of the country — which is where most of the big strikes of these workers have occurred.

The highest concentration of *agricultural* workers is found in the south-eastern region, with Scotland coming second. The regions where noteworthy strikes have taken place are the Eastern Counties (third in order, with 14 per cent of all agricultural workers), the West Midlands (sixth, with 8 per cent), Lancashire and Cheshire (seventh, with 6 per cent), and the Northern Rural Belt (eighth, with 5 per cent). The Eastern Counties, however, comprise the main cereal area in the country; they are therefore characterized by large holdings and a high degree of

mechanization;[1] and they have generally been the home of agricultural Trade Unionism.[2]

Industrial 'strike-proneness'

The following set of tables illustrates, similarly, industrial 'strike-proneness' — that is, the relative 'strike-proneness' of workers in different groups of industries within the United Kingdom as a whole and within the separate regions. For the United Kingdom as a whole the picture is as follows.

Industrial 'strike-proneness', 1911 *to June* 1945

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
B. (i)	*UNITED KINGDOM*			
	Mining, etc.	6.2	41.8	6.7
	Textiles	6.6	28.4	4.3
	Metal, etc.	11.6	15.0	1.3
	Transport	6.8	7.8	1.1
	Building	5.3	1.9	0.4
	Clothing	4.2	1.6	0.4
	Other industries	59.3	3.5	0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

It has already been pointed out that the exclusion of certain strikes from consideration gives an impression which is rather different from that which would obtain if all strikes were included. The extent of the difference may be seen from the following comparison.

Industry	(I) *'Strike-proneness ratios' of workers involved in all major strikes falling within Census regions (as above)*	(II) *'Strike-proneness ratios' of workers involved in* all strikes *(excluding the General Strike of* 1926)
Mining, etc.	6.7	7.9
Textiles	4.3	2.2
Metal, etc.	1.3	1.4
Transport	1.1	1.5
Building	0.4	0.5
Clothing	0.4	0.3
Other industries and services	0.1	0.1
All industries	1.0	1.0

Thus the exclusion from column (I) of the great national strikes reduces the relative 'strike-proneness ratio' of miners considerably.

[1] In 1931 the Eastern Counties had more tractors per hundred holdings than any other area — tractors being predominantly used in holdings of over 150 acres. (See *Agricultural Output of England and Wales, Cmd.* 4605 (1931), pp. 66-7.)

[2] See ERNLE, *English Farming Past and Present* (1936 edn.), p. 414, and GROVES, *Sharpen the Sickle* (1949), *passim*. In Joseph Arch's day no less than three unions were active in the region, which was also in the forefront of the agricultural Trade Union revival of the 1890s. The National Farmers' Union was started in Norfolk at this time as a combination of big farmers for mutual help in strikes. It was again in the Eastern Counties that the present N.U.A.W. was established in 1906. In 1912-14 there were many small strikes in this region, the best-known of these being designed to secure 'the King's Pay and the King's Conditions' (i.e. similar to those enjoyed by the workers on the Royal estates at Sandringham).

The converse happens in textiles. Because of the localization of the cotton textile industry, big textile strikes seldom spread outside the particular regions concerned, and the strikers do not have to be excluded in column (I). Thus the 'strike-proneness ratio' for textile workers in this column is relatively inflated. (However, arbitrarily to exclude all big textile strikes would distort the figures more in the opposite sense.)

The case of transport is like that of mining: it is the exclusion of national railway strikes, and the many smaller transport strikes which have extended beyond one region, which reduces the 'strike-proneness ratio' of transport workers in column (I).

So also with building workers: the wide distribution of the workers and their organization by separate crafts has meant that some widespread strikes have taken place which have had to be excluded from consideration in column (I).

In general, however, the pattern of the 'strike-proneness' of workers in different industries in the country as a whole is clear enough. The patterns for the separate regions are shown in the remaining tables, which may now be given without further comment.

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
B. (ii)	*SOUTH WALES*			
	Mining, etc.	31.2	89.9	2.9
	Textiles	0.2	0.1	0.5
	Metal, etc.	12.2	7.4	0.6
	Transport	9.0	1.5	0.2
	Building	3.3	0.6	0.2
	Clothing	1.5	0.1	0.1
	Other industries	42.6	0.4	<0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
B. (iii)	*WEST RIDING*			
	Mining, etc.	12.5	70.2	5.6
	Textiles	16.9	18.9	1.1
	Metal, etc.	13.8	6.4	0.5
	Transport	5.2	1.6	0.3
	Building	3.8	0.1	<0.1
	Clothing	5.1	1.7	0.3
	Other industries	42.7	1.1	<0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
B. (iv)	*NORTHERN IRELAND*			
	Mining, etc.	0.5	—	0.0
	Textiles	18.3	12.4	0.7
	Metal, etc.	6.8	72.1	10.6
	Transport	3.8	4.0	1.1
	Building	3.9	1.2	0.3
	Clothing	4.5	8.5	1.9
	Other Industries	62.2	1.8	<0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

		Percentage of industrial population	Percentage of strikers	'Strike-proneness ratio'
B. (v)	*LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE*			
	Mining, etc.	3.7	4.3	1.2
	Textiles	19.9	76.7	3.9
	Metal, etc.	10.7	8.3	0.8
	Transport	7.6	6.3	0.8
	Building	4.1	0.9	0.2
	Clothing	4.6	1.1	0.2
	Other industries	49.4	2.4	<0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (vi)	*SCOTLAND*			
	Mining, etc.	6.6	41.4	6.3
	Textiles	6.9	17.5	2.5
	Metal, etc.	12.6	26.3	2.1
	Transport	7.0	6.7	1.0
	Building	4.6	3.0	0.7
	Clothing	2.1	0.3	0.1
	Other industries	60.2	4.8	0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (vii)	*NORTH AND CENTRAL WALES*			
	Mining, etc.	11.7	56.6	4.8
	Textiles	1.8	20.3	11.3
	Metal, etc.	4.7	6.0	1.3
	Transport	6.2	—	0.0
	Building	5.3	12.5	2.4
	Clothing	1.7	—	0.0
	Other industries	68.6	4.6	0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (viii)	*NORTHERN RURAL BELT*			
	Mining, etc.	4.9	44.5	9.1
	Textiles	1.2	—	0.0
	Metal, etc.	12.0	13.8	1.2
	Transport	9.7	29.7	3.1
	Building	4.6	1.4	0.3
	Clothing	2.1	0.9	0.4
	Other industries	65.5	9.7	0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (ix)	*WEST MIDLANDS*			
	Mining, etc.	5.2	26.9	5.2
	Textiles	2.4	2.5	1.0
	Metal, etc.	24.9	55.2	2.2
	Transport	5.1	3.6	0.7
	Building	5.1	2.1	0.4
	Clothing	3.2	—	0.0
	Other industries	54.1	9.7	0.2
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

		Percentage of industrial population	*Percentage of strikers*	*'Strike-proneness ratio'*
B. (x)	*NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM*			
	Mining, etc.	25.2	71.8	2.8
	Textiles	0.4	—	0.0
	Metal, etc.	16.1	26.6	1.7
	Transport	7.1	1.1	0.2
	Building	3.8	0.3	0.1
	Clothing	1.3	—	0.0
	Other industries	46.1	0.2	<0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (xi)	*LONDON AND THE SOUTH-EAST*			
	Mining, etc.	0.6	3.3	5.5
	Textiles	0.6	1.0	1.7
	Metal, etc.	8.2	15.7	1.9
	Transport	7.4	51.5	7.0
	Building	7.1	10.0	1.4
	Clothing	4.9	4.8	1.0
	Other industries	71.2	13.7	0.2
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (xii)	*EAST MIDLANDS*			
	Mining, etc.	13.7	65.5	4.8
	Textiles	13.6	14.0	1.0
	Metal, etc.	8.9	8.3	0.9
	Transport	5.4	—	0.0
	Building	4.5	1.0	0.2
	Clothing	10.2	9.4	0.9
	Other industries	43.7	1.8	0.1
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (xiii)	*EASTERN COUNTIES*			
	Mining, etc.	0.6	—	0.0
	Textiles	0.9	—	0.0
	Metal, etc.	7.7	23.0	3.0
	Transport	6.1	8.5	1.4
	Building	5.1	21.3	4.2
	Clothing	3.6	10.5	2.9
	Other industries	76.0	36.7	0.5
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0
B. (xiv)	*SOUTH-WESTERN COUNTIES*			
	Mining, etc.	2.7	44.8	16.6
	Textiles	1.2	10.4	8.7
	Metal, etc.	6.9	—	0.0
	Transport	5.9	—	0.0
	Building	7.0	44.8	6.4
	Clothing	3.3	—	0.0
	Other industries	73.0	—	0.0
	All industries	100.0	100.0	1.0

It must be re-emphasized that figures from any one of the tables cannot be directly compared with those from another. In some of the tables the 'strike-proneness ratios' for certain industries are much 'inflated' because workers in other industries have not been involved in major strikes at all.[1] This is especially noticeable in the South-Western Counties.[2]

In any case one would expect the industrial differences in 'strike-proneness' to be more marked than the regional differences, and this will in fact come out clearly.

Regional and industrial influences distinguished and compared

In order to distinguish regional and industrial influences as far as possible, standardized 'strike-proneness ratios' for regions and for industries are now given. The formula used is:—

$$\Sigma \text{ (by regions)} \quad \left\{ \frac{s}{S} \left(\frac{s_R}{s} \div \frac{p_R}{p} \right) \right\}$$

and

$$\Sigma \text{ (by industries)} \quad \left\{ \frac{\sigma}{S} \left(\frac{\sigma_I}{\sigma} \div \frac{\pi_I}{\pi} \right) \right\},$$

where S = all strikers in the United Kingdom, σ = all strikers in a particular region, s = all strikers in a particular industry; and π = all workers in a particular region, p = all workers in a particular industry. Suffix R = in a given region, and suffix I = in a given industry. In other words the standardized *regional* 'strike-proneness ratio' uses as a weight the share of the various *industries* in the total striking, and the standardized *industrial* 'strike-proneness ratio' uses as a weight the share of the various *regions* in the total striking.

Standardized 'strike-proneness ratios'

Region	*'s.-p.r.'*	*Industry*	*'s.-p.r.'*
South Wales	1.3	Mining, etc.	3.7
West Riding	1.2	Textiles	2.0
Northern Ireland	1.2	Metal, etc.	1.3
Lancs. and Cheshire	1.1	Transport	1.1
Scotland	1.1	Building	0.4
N. and Central Wales	0.5	Clothing	0.3
N. Rural Belt	0.5	Other industries	0.1
West Midlands	0.4		
N'land and Durham	0.4	All industries	1.0
London and S.E.	0.3		
East Midlands	0.3		
Eastern Counties	0.1		
S.W. Counties	0.1		
All regions	1.0		

The effect of the standardized regional 'strike-proneness ratio' is therefore as follows. To take South Wales as an example: in the original table (A. (i), all industries) the 'strike-proneness ratio' of South Wales is high because although

[1] Thus those who strike are 'blamed', so to speak, for the striking which the workers in the other industries do not do.

[2] It so happens that Scotland, whose industrial composition is most like that of the U.K. as a whole, shows a not dissimilar range of 'strike-proneness ratios'.

it has a small share of the occupied population of the U.K. (3.6 per cent), it has a large share of all strikers (17.3 per cent). This high proportion of strikers reflects the fact that the small section of the occupied population which works in South Wales includes (*a*) a big proportion of particularly 'strike-prone' workers (31.2 per cent miners, see table B. (ii)), and also (*b*) these miners are relatively more 'strike-prone' than miners in other regions (see table A. (ii)).

It is the former factor — i.e. the fact that a big proportion of South Wales workers are miners — which is eliminated in the standardized regional 'strike-proneness ratio'; and it will be seen that even apart from the fact that South Wales happens to contain a big proportion of miners it still heads the list of 'strike-prone' regions because workers in South Wales industries generally, when the industries are given their appropriate weight according to their share of the total striking, are still markedly 'strike-prone'. (It is interesting to recall that an attempt was made by the big motor works near Oxford, in the middle 'thirties, to restrict Welsh immigration for this very reason. Labour had been unorganized in the works until 1934, when strikes broke out for better conditions of work: 'prominent parts in this movement were played by immigrants from the depressed areas, and particularly by men from Wales. Thus 16 of the 23 men on the strike committee are said to have been from Wales, a proportion far in excess of the proportion of Welsh workers to the total employed in the motor industry. It appears that, in following years, vacancies notified by the motor works to Ministry of Labour offices included specific requests for workers who were not from Wales.'[1])

The other side of the picture is given by the standardized industrial 'strike-proneness ratio'. To take the mining industry as an example: in the original table (B. (i), all regions) the 'strike-proneness ratio' of miners is high because although miners form a relatively small proportion of the occupied population of the U.K. (6.2 per cent), they comprise a relatively large proportion of all strikers (41.8 per cent). The large proportion of strikers reflects the fact that (*a*) a considerable proportion of U.K. miners work in a region where miners are particularly 'strike-prone' compared with miners in other regions (18.1 per cent in South Wales, see table A. (ii)), and also (*b*) these South Wales miners are more 'strike-prone' than workers in other industries in the same region (see table B. (ii)).

It is again the former factor — i.e. the fact that a relatively large proportion of all U.K. miners work in South Wales — which is eliminated in the standardized industrial 'strike-proneness ratio'; and it will be seen that even apart from the fact that miners are concentrated in the 'strike-prone region' of South Wales, mining still heads the list of 'strike-prone industries' because miners in all regions, when the regions are given their appropriate weight according to their share of the total striking, are still particularly 'strike-prone'.

Apart from the imperfections of the evidence, the formal isolation of regional 'strike-proneness' from industrial 'strike-proneness' is somewhat academic. As has been said, a rigid separation is impossible, but the accompanying figures indicate the kind of distinction which can reasonably be made. As one would expect, regional differences, on analysis, prove much slighter than industrial.

The more obvious field of industrial influences has been considered already.

[1] DANIEL, *Some Factors affecting the Movement of Labour, Oxford Economic Papers* (February 1940), p. 157n.

It may be said that regional influences on striking are to a large extent industrial causes in disguise; for example, the unbalanced industrial structure of certain regions makes the effects of economic depression much more acute. But in some of these regions, because people live near their work and near their fellow-workers, it is easier for them to combine, and for their attitudes to affect their fellows[1] — even in industries other than their own. Nor should the effects of social tradition be ignored.

Thus a policy such as that outlined in the 1944 *White Paper on Employment Policy*, of diversifying the industrial structure of the various regions, or a policy of creating balanced townships where people live away from their work and in greater isolation from their fellow-workers, might reduce a regional tendency to 'strike-proneness'. 'Over-centralization of industries in certain areas', said Professor Abercrombie in 1937,[2] 'may produce a social atmosphere which may tend to, shall we say, industrial strikes' — a suggestion which is borne out by our analysis. Since 1939, indeed, some degree of industrial diversification has been achieved in all parts of the country — most successfully, it is interesting to note, in Wales.[3]

* * *

Section 4: Underlying causes of strikes

Strike statistics have so far been taken as reflecting the economic and social conditions which form their background. At this point we must consider more specifically the way in which these conditions affect industrial workers. We have, it is true, some direct information here, in the form of the statistics of strike causes; but before considering these we must clear the ground by making two

[1] There is of course no measure of these things, although suggestive regional differences appear if 'major strikes' are divided by *cause* into strikes for reasons of solidarity (that is, strikes on Trade Union principle, sympathetic strikes, and strikes for the reinstatement of other workers), and, on the other hand, strikes about wages, hours and working conditions. More than one-third of all those who struck in solidarity with their fellow-workers came from South Wales; and, of the strikers in this region, a very high proportion (mostly, of course, miners — see p. 197) struck on these grounds.

Percentage of all strikers (major strikes only) who struck for reasons of solidarity, 1911 *to June* 1945. (Figures in brackets refer to those involved in strikes where 'solidarity' was not the *sole* recorded point at issue.)

South Wales	41.6	(42.2)
West Riding	4.2	(13.5)
Lancashire and Cheshire	8.9	(9.8)
Scotland	22.4	(22.7)
London and South East	27.3	(30.7)
All other regions	13.7	(18.3)
All regions	17.3	(20.5)

[2] *Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of Industry* (1937), p. 95.

[3] See Leser, *Changes in Level and Diversity of Employment in Regions of Great Britain*, 1939-1947 (*Economic Journal* (September 1949)). — It should be remarked that if *annual* regional 'strike-proneness ratios' are examined, that of South Wales has, on the whole, tended to decline, despite a marked rise during and after the depression of the early 1930s; that of Lancashire and Cheshire has declined from the middle of the period; while those of Scotland and the West Riding have tended to increase.

points: (*a*) that strikes are only one of many possible manifestations of industrial unrest, and (*b*) that the statistics of strike causes, relating only to immediate causes, may not adequately reflect their underlying causes.

Strikes as a measure of industrial unrest

Strikes are not, of course, an inevitable symptom of industrial unrest. A high rate of labour turnover, absenteeism, inefficiency, sickness and accidents, or intensive political activity, may also be signs of it. So also, for example, may habitual pilfering, since this may not be dictated so much by economic needs as by social resentment.[1]

In this country, statistics of labour turnover have not generally been available, at any rate not in a form comparable with that of strike statistics; nor, as in the U.S.A., are they broken down by causes.[2] Statistics of absenteeism, except in coal-mining — where absences have been reckoned as a percentage of a somewhat arbitrary figure of 'possible manshifts' — are virtually non-existent.[3] Sickness and accident figures are also generally defective, at any rate in a form systematic enough to provide a measure of industrial unrest.

Strikes, however, are not only the most obvious and dramatic expression of unrest, but provide the simplest heads under which to collect information. For this reason strike statistics exist over a considerable period. Moreover, data relating to the more devious manifestations of unrest are at best limited or sample data, whereas strike statistics are not samples but more or less complete compilations. They are thus the best quantitative evidence we have. But it must be remembered that unrest takes the form of strikes only if workers have some degree of cohesion. While for example it will often take this form with miners, with young unskilled women in the clothing industry, say, it may appear in a high rate of labour turnover. Thus a decline in the number of strikes does not necessarily mean that discontent is less; 'it may merely mean that discontent is finding expression in other ways or even that it is not finding expression at all'[4] — except perhaps in the speeding-up of the escapist routine of mechanized amusements, in the growth of 'irresponsibility' or pilfering, or in other apparently unrelated social phenomena. The expression of industrial unrest thus ranges from these vague indications at one end of the scale to organized go-slow, strikes and revolutionary activity at the other — the form of expression being deter-

[1] 'Quite respectable men, who would not themselves steal, take a light view of pilfering. They seem to think that because the men have grievances they are justified in such conduct. "We are robbed all the time, therefore we are justified in robbing"; or "The employers exploit us, and so why shouldn't we get a bit of our own back?" or, "It isn't poor people who will lose by it", are common trains of thought and argument.' (HILTON and others, *The Other War* (1918), pp. 82-3. The authors discuss various topics from this point of view: e.g. workers' waste of industrial materials, drinking habits, Trade Union restrictions and so on.)

[2] The Ministry of Labour began to issue a labour turnover series (gross losses from all causes) in October 1948 for many manufacturing industries. The first returns gave a monthly turnover rate of 2.5 per cent for all industries covered, the highest rate being 4.1 per cent. COLLIS and GREENWOOD (*The Health of the Industrial Worker* (1921), p. 76), on the basis of a limited wartime survey, gave an *annual* turnover rate of 100 per cent as 'quite ordinary', and one of 400 per cent as 'only somewhat unusual'; but this seems an exaggerated figure even for war conditions. (Cf. SARGANT FLORENCE, *Labour* (1949), p. 46.)

[3] Absenteeism is more fully discussed elsewhere (pp. 279-82).

[4] HARE, *Industrial Relations in New Zealand* (1946), p. 48.

mined by a complex mechanism of economic, political, technical and psychological factors.

If this view is correct, some connexion should appear between the incidence of these different manifestations, if sufficient evidence were available. Certain special studies have, indeed, indicated a relation between voluntary absenteeism and labour turnover. There has, moreover, been thought to be some connexion between voluntary absenteeism in coal-mining and the distance of mineworkings from the pit bottom, and this — since the remoteness of workings means a reduction in coal-getting, and therefore in earnings — suggests that absenteeism is partly due to dissatisfaction about wages.[1] An appendix to the present section suggests that strikes and absenteeism may at times be 'interchangeable' forms of unrest.[2]

It is perhaps noteworthy that there has been little conscious co-ordination until recently between strikes and political activity, even when they have been simultaneous. Over the last hundred years in this country there has been, indeed, something of an alternation in industrial and political activity:

> 'We're done with strike and lock-out —
> They cause too many a knock-out;
> We'll take to making the laws O!
> We'll take to making the laws!'

wrote Mr. R. C. K. Ensor[3] before the first world war. Of course, if strikes were undertaken only when they were politically expedient, they would sometimes have to be suppressed at whatever immediate cost to the workers concerned, while sometimes they would be ordered without any immediate industrial cause. In the French strikes of 1947, called under Communist pressure, for example,

> 'When we strike, as has happened three times, the impression is that an order has been given, even when there is a vote. Indeed, on one occasion there was a majority for a strike (after we had been invited to strike — there had been no noticeable unrest), but we were subsequently told by the chief trade union delegate that the plan had been changed and we were not to. There had been no change in pay or conditions of work to explain this.'[4]

Similarly, when Communists in the eastern sector of Berlin in December 1948 called for Sunday working in order to prevent workers who lived in the western

[1] *Industrial Fatigue Research Board Report No.* 51 (1928), *A Study of Absenteeism in a Group of Ten Collieries*. However, if wages fall very sharply, absenteeism naturally declines too; a few years later the *Industrial Health Research Board Report No.* 62 (1931), while confirming the results of the previous study noted that 'absenteeism is greatly influenced by economic conditions, for when the possible earnings of the coal face workers fell by 32 per cent, the time lost by voluntary absenteeism fell to a half' (*Two Studies of Absenteeism in Coal Mines*, p. 33).

[2] See pp. 225-6.

[3] *Labour's Hunting Song*, in *Songs for Socialists* (Fabian Society, 1912). The opposite point of view has been put with pleasant irony by COLE (*The World of Labour* (1928 edn.), p. 402): 'if, then, strikes do or can succeed, what we want is more strikes. If they do not or cannot succeed, we must give up our antiquated weapon, and forsake the blunderbuss of economic action for the scientific precision of the parliamentary repeating rifle. Should we find, however, that the blunderbuss, awkward as it is, contains real shot, while the rifle is provided only with blank cartridges, we may prefer to retain the older and more cumbrous weapon.'

[4] Report of an English worker in a French factory, *Manchester Guardian* (December 11th, 1947).

sector from voting in an election held under the protection of the Western Powers, the Social Democratic Unions retorted by calling a short transport strike so as to delay the workers and give them time to register their votes.

In Britain, however, political discipline has been looser, and the strike movement has usually operated independently. Strikes are still to a large extent an expression of the 'unconscious' of the labour movement, and their causes are not always clear even to the strikers themselves. 'Why are you on strike?' asked the *Glasgow and District Railwaymen's Strike Bulletin* in September 1919;[1] 'What! You don't know? Still, it is not surprising that you don't know. It will be our duty to enlighten you.'

Character of underlying causes

> 'I doubt whether folk on this side of the gangway realize what it takes to make a workman strike.'
>
> W. J. Brown, M.P., *Commons* (February 13th, 1946).

By underlying causes of strikes we mean those causes which do not become explicit, and whose operation has to be inferred. These, of course, cover an almost unlimited field; 'it would be no exaggeration to say that in the problem of industrial unrest are focused nearly all the major problems of social organization, and that in the last analysis the remedies would be found to involve modifications in our social organization, in not only its economic aspects, but in its political structure, and also in our individual and social morality'.[2] Human motives are never as simple as they are painted and, even at the cost of labouring the obvious, it is necessary to stress this before considering the immediate causes attributed to strikes.

Most accounts of the causes of strikes make no distinction between immediate and underlying causes.[3] One of the few British attempts at analysing underlying causes was made by the 1917 Commission of Inquiry, whose Reports have already been quoted; but since the Reports were made in wartime they were usually confined to more or less ephemeral questions. Only in the report on South Wales was an analysis of so-called 'Permanent Causes' undertaken; but many of these were not so much causes as aggravating symptoms, and proved less permanent than the Commissioners feared. For present purposes we may group the underlying causes of strikes under three general headings: bad social conditions, fatigue and frustration in industrial work, and the inferiority of the worker's position.[4] Wage questions come in a somewhat different category.

[1] No.1 (September 18th, 1919).

[2] Hare, op. cit., p. 49. See also *The Waste of Capitalism* (T.U.C. and L.P., 1924), p. 100f.

[3] One writer, for example, classifies strikes as (i) political, (ii) economic, (iii) for the betterment of working conditions, (iv) sympathetic, and (v) caused by 'collective fatigue or emotion' (T. A. Lloyd Davies, *Strikes, British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, vol. III, No. 1 (January 1946), pp. 49-50). It is hard to see how the last 'cause' can have a separate existence.

[4] These cannot pretend, of course, to be all-inclusive. The Bishop of Rochester, in *Five Questions Before the Church*, attributed 'this new industrial phenomenon of unofficial strikes' to 'a spreading rot in the unit of society — home life' (quoted in *Reynolds News* (November 2nd, 1947)). Some industrial psychologists also see industrial unrest as in part a reflection of domestic disharmony — although it can hardly be suggested that the workers who are the readiest to strike necessarily have the worst home lives.

Bad social conditions

Social conditions — nutrition, housing, education and so on — are so closely bound up with industrial conditions (particularly of course with wages), that the boundaries between jealousy, a sense of injustice, and a moral indignation sharp enough to produce a desire for fundamental social change are difficult to draw, and industrial unrest may become symptomatic of revolt against the social order in general. The 1917 Commissioners,[1] in their Report on South Wales, wrote:

> 'The conviction that Capital and Labour are necessarily hostile, a conviction engendered by conflict on industrial matters, has been accentuated by the fact that the social conditions of the working classes are of an unsatisfactory character. This fact was brought out by numerous witnesses both on the employers' side and on the men's side, and there can be no doubt that, although not always expressed, the men feel deeply discontented with their housing accommodation and with their unwholesome and unattractive environment generally . . . The influence of the social factors on the creation of industrial unrest cannot be measured, but that their influence is great is undeniable.'

The Commissioners, however, are not alone in assigning a considerable importance to these 'social factors', even though no attributed cause of strikes relates to them. We may illustrate the point by noting a certain correspondence between regional 'strike-proneness' (as measured by the standardized ratios discussed on p. 207) and bad social conditions.

As a measure of the latter, E. J. Buckatzsch has constructed a general Index of Adverse Social Conditions from five primary indices according to their intercorrelation: the five indices relating to unemployment, social class, poor relief, housing and rates.[2] If the general Indices of Adverse Social Conditions for the 81 County Boroughs in Buckatzsch's table are grouped according to the Census regions, and the mean of these Indices above the upper quartile within each region is taken for comparison with the standardized 'strike-proneness ratio' for the respective regions, a correlation coefficient of 0.576 is obtained.[3]

A more significant correlation would hardly be expected, since acute and widespread poverty may absorb workers' attention from the possibility of remedying it, in the sheer struggle to obtain the necessities of life. It is well above the lowest levels of poverty that workers are most capable of self-discipline and common action, and are readiest to resent insults to their self-respect.

Men have sometimes, though not often, struck for conscious 'social' objectives. Before the first world war there were a number of strikes concerning 'status' or 'human rights', of which the most famous was the Driver Knox strike of 6000 railwaymen of the North Eastern railway in 1912.[4]

[1] *Cmd.* 8668, p. 23.

[2] For a description of the method of construction of the general Index, see *Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* for December 1946.

[3] If the unstandardized ratio is taken, the correlation is higher ($r = 0.624$); but in this case the influence of the exceptionally 'strike-prone' miners in depressed areas affects the figure disproportionately.

[4] By this strike the men asserted the 'right' to get drunk when off duty. Knox was fined by Newcastle magistrates on October 26th, 1912; on December 14th, a London magistrate reported, following an inquiry, that while Knox was 'not quite sober', he was 'not drunk in the police-court sense'. The face of all concerned was saved and Knox was reinstated; but the strikers suffered a deduction from wages because the strike was unauthorized. (This was the first of a series of 'one-man' strikes and strike-threats.)

Fatigue and frustration in industrial work

> 'I have only one life to live. Why should I spend the best part of it in factories and mines? They may be air-conditioned, but I don't want to be in them. The work may be light, but I don't want to do it. I won't sell my life for a new radio set. You can go and climb a tree.'
>
> N. Balchin, *Occupational Psychology*, July 1947.

An important feature of industrial life is sheer physical fatigue, often associated with low-paid jobs. Fatigue is scarcely the product of modern industry, and there are no standards by which industrial fatigue can be compared over time; but the development of repetition work has produced special forms of overstrain as well as special conditions which accentuate its effects. These conditions may breed a dissatisfaction which has recently been stigmatized as 'neurotic'; the Industrial Health Research Board, for instance, carried out a wartime inquiry on this question. 'Neurosis' was found to be associated with, and perhaps induced by, 'excessively long working hours, inadequate lighting, tasks which are boring or disliked, work requiring constant attention without giving the worker scope for initiative or technical responsibility, and work requiring skill inappropriate to the worker's intelligence, especially when it is beneath his abilities.'[1]

Fatigue may, of course, not be the product of monotonous unskilled work, but of concentration on highly skilled work. Experiments concerning fatigue were restricted for some time to the effects of the particular fatigue due to monotony; but Bartlett[2] has described an experiment with a machine specially constructed, *per contra*, to tax a man's adaptability and skill:

> 'When the operator began, absorbed in his task, he was usually silent. As he went on, sighs and shufflings emerged from the machine. Then mild expletives took the place of sighs. By the end of the experiment, which lasted for two hours or more, most operators kept up a flow of the most violent language they knew. And all the time their handling of the controls became more and more rough, so that they were doing more work, and not less, as the task went on. It was at this stage that the tendency to project all errors on the experimenter or the machine reached its height.'

It is easy to see how the kind of fatigue reproduced in this experiment may give rise to a discontent which is projected on to the management or the 'system', and subsequently rationalized — in the form of a particular grievance — as the immediate cause of a strike.[3]

The frustrations of industrial life are various. It has often been pointed out that since an industrial worker rarely makes the whole of anything, he lacks the

[1] *The Times* (August 7th, 1947). See *Industrial Health Research Board, Report No.* 90 (1947), *The Incidence of Neurosis Among Factory Workers*.

[2] *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, Series B, 131, pp. 247-57 (1943).

[3] The effects of fatigue may be even more insidious. The 1947 annual report of the General Federation of Trade Unions, for example, went so far as to insist that 'the popular urge to escape from hard manual labour and physical risk incurred in the basic and creative industries' had 'basically altered' educational policy, and it deplored 'a turgid anti-industrial psychology sponsored by the education authorities and fostered in nearly every home' (quoted in *Manchester Guardian* (June 24th, 1947)). This has no doubt been particularly true of mining areas.

craftsman's teleological interest in his work.[1] He has not even a direct personal link with the consumer. His work is largely subject to the autocracies of machine, foreman, and employer; his performance of it is supervised at every stage. The direct worker, as Mr. Walter C. Puckey,[2] a contemporary factory manager, put it, has so many indirect advisers around him that he is in danger of suffocation. His self-esteem suffers.

Many workers find little 'social esteem' either. Mr. Puckey stressed the social inferiority of the manual worker even in the factory:

> 'The girl of 16 in the general office is probably eligible immediately for the company's pension scheme and other amenities. The office worker has decent cloakrooms — the factory worker usually has no doors or only half-doors because he can't be trusted not to "mike". He is still called a "hand" by many who ought to know better. Many other examples could be shown, but they all add up to the lack of status in society of the manual worker.'

There was a danger, moreover, that the 'debasement' of the manual worker would spread to clerical workers as mechanization developed. Many contemporary writers have drawn attention to the tendency to treat the worker as a machine-tool,[3] although opinions differ about the importance of this as a cause of unrest.[4] No doubt the low status of the worker accounts for the frequent harshness of industrial discipline; until recently it has seldom been thought necessary to consult workers or even to discuss with them the reasons for the orders they carry out. Still less often has the worker been informed on policy questions — the financial aspects of the firm for which he works, the nature and motives of directors' decisions, and so on — and such cumulative ignorance inevitably breeds unrest. Indeed despite the wartime development of low-level joint consultation, the words of Sargant Florence, written nearly thirty years ago, still ring true:

> 'Any likelihood of a fame-nexus or hobby-nexus in modern industry is eliminated where an employee's work is taken from him in exchange for his wages and sunk in the product of the whole firm. The worker occupies a subordinate position, with knowledge of only a small link in the chain of production. All the thinking is done from above, and there is little or no chance of choosing between alternative actions.'[5]

[1] Some part of the resistance to changed methods in industry — for example, the objection of older miners to the replacement of the stall system (which offers greater scope for craftsmanship) by the conveyor system — is attributable to the worker's desire to retain a craftsman's interest in his work; quite apart from the question of craftsmen's privileges. See, for example, GRENFELL, *Coal* (1947), p. 45; and, in general, GOODRICH, *The Frontier of Control* (1919), p. 39f.

[2] General manager of Hoover, Ltd., lecturing at the Royal Society of Arts (*Manchester Guardian* report (January 30th, 1947)).

[3] Cf. DRUCKER, *Why Men Strike, Fortnightly Review* (February 1947); WARNER and LOW, *The Social System of the Modern Factory*; *The Strike: A Social Analysis* (Yale, 1947); and others.

[4] Since in Britain it is mainly the older industries, rather than the newer mass-production trades, that have been afflicted with strikes, some writers (e.g. JONES, in *The Structure of Industry* (1948, pp. 64-5), have been inclined to discount the advance of mechanization and the destruction of craftsmanship as sources of unrest, by comparison with the inter-war insecurity of employment. The importance of the latter has already been stressed; but the effect of mechanization even in the older industries should not be ignored. Workers in the newer industries have been less well equipped for taking strike action.

[5] *Economics of Fatigue and Unrest* (1924), p. 74.

The fact that the worker in most cases works for the private profit of others[1] as well as for his own subsistence, and that his subsistence largely depends on the 'profitability' of his work, leaves him, it is contended, little incentive to work beyond the mere wage. Recently, of course, many attempts have been made to create some sort of 'fame-nexus'; flattering broadcasts; biographical notes and photographs of individual workers in the Press; differential wage-payments; and schemes of differential taxation and rationing. But differential methods are by definition limited in their appeal.

In the matter of a 'hobby-nexus', however, it seems that little can be done. The more monotonous the work, the less the worker's personality is involved in it; as a Welsh worker put it to the author, 'a man goes home and trims his privet hedge and hides his personality behind that'. Thus many of the efforts of industrial welfare are intended to distract or divert the worker from thinking about his work at all. True, it has been suggested that armchair critics are more affected by the worker's boredom (vicariously) than he is himself, for workers are not always articulate in interviews. Yet while monotonous work permits the formation of habits, and habits conserve energy which can then be canalized by 'Music While You Work' into day-dreaming, speculation or reminiscence, it may also accentuate a state of boredom in which 'minor disturbances and distractions which would pass unnoticed by the interested worker become exaggerated and intensify still further the emotional background of discontent'.[2] Moreover, the more intelligent the worker, the more discontented he is liable to be.[3]

Some writers, however, suggest that in the long run one can expect, and welcome, a deliberate 'dissociation' of the worker's personality from his work. For example, Professor Stoetzel of Bordeaux has pointed out that the life of a conscript soldier in peacetime is dissociated from his military duties, which are merely an episode in his life; and that this 'dissociated type' of personality is so much the normal type that anyone who shows too much zeal tends to become the butt of his fellows. For the industrial worker also, technical advances and the shortening of working hours are likely to reduce the claims of working life: 'on peut sans trop de difficulté concevoir un état social dans lequel une existence normalement dissociée des travailleurs deviendrait possible. La personnalité véritable devra alors être cherchée dans les loisirs'.[4]

[1] The 'expressed disinclination of many of the operatives to make unrestricted profit for private employers', together with the 'lack of interest in the Industry evidenced by operatives owing to their non-participation in control', and the fear of unemployment, were three main reasons given for the restriction of output in the building industry after the first world war. (See the *Report of the Management and Costs Committee of the Industrial Council for the Building Industry*, 1920). On this basis, a classic Guild Socialist Utopia was erected.

[2] *Industrial Health Research Board Report No. 77* (1937), *Fatigue and Boredom in Repetitive Work*, p. 65. NORTHCOTT (*Personnel Management* (1945), p. 221), pursues this point more fully than is permissible here.

[3] See *I.H.R.B. Report* No. 56 (1929), *The Effect of Monotony in Work.*

[4] *Les Relations Industrielles et la Psychologie Sociale* (address to the International Conference on Mental Hygiene (August 19th, 1948)). The analogy is misleading: the military life of a conscript in peacetime represents very little of his expected existence, but industrial working hours can hardly be reduced correspondingly. Moreover, the conscript's service is soon over; the worker's is not (except in the case of girl workers 'filling in time' before marriage). Again, it is significant that the character of military training in France, as in other countries, has had to be recast in such a way as to enlist the conscript's interest and thus make 'dissociation' more difficult.

Is so complete a dissociation possible? Many workers achieve a partial dissociation, yet because this can hardly be as complete as in, say, the operation of brushing one's teeth, there remains a conflict between the demands of the day-dream and the demands of the work. Such conflicts cause distress and fatigue during working hours, and this makes it difficult to achieve satisfaction outside working hours; and the resulting frustration reacts again on the worker's adaptability, efficiency and morale. The expediency of diversion after work (as distinct from distraction during work) as a solvent of discontent is widely recognized. No less an authority than Lord Askwith, for example, maintained before a Royal Commission that greyhound racing 'had provided a means of interest or distraction which may be regarded as an antidote to discontentment of mind and social unrest'.[1] Yet distraction is a poor substitute for achievement, even though betting at least provides a field of 'private enterprise' where the individual's choice and judgment, increasingly inhibited during working hours, can be exercised in some fashion. With the decline of craftsmanship in industry, the filling-in of football pool coupons has become something of a skilled job with its own technical literature.[2]

It has sometimes been said that the growth in the size of firms makes the employer seem increasingly remote and impersonal, and contributes to the frustration felt by the worker as a mere 'cog in the machine'. While there is no doubt some truth in this, one could hardly expect any measurable reaction on strikes.[3] 'A man may chafe under factory discipline', wrote T. H. Marshall,[4] 'and believe that the root of the trouble lies in the unrepresentative and irresponsible character of management. But in fact it may lie in the actual nature of the job he is doing or large-scale production as such'. It is possible that the encouragement of 'team work' in industry may help to relieve these frustrations.[5]

The effect of monotonous, tiring, unhealthy or frustrating work on striking is bound to be a concealed one. Men do not strike on the specific ground that their work is monotonous or unsuited to their abilities. Even physical conditions were late in coming to the surface of consciousness as a cause of unrest: 'the Trade Unionist demands for safe, healthy, and comfortable conditions of work appear to date only from about 1840, and can scarcely be said to have become a definite part of Trade Union policy until about 1871', wrote the Webbs,[6] remarking on the 'long-continued indifference to the risks of accident and disease'. Similarly Sargant Florence[7] noted that

> 'physical working conditions do not usually arouse as much unrest as might seem justified. Only 4 per cent of all strikes in America were due to working conditions (not necessarily all of them physical working conditions at that), and in England physical conditions are not officially classified as a cause at all.'

[1] *Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting* (1932); *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 110, para. 15.

[2] For a development of this point, see Zweig, *Men in the Pits* (1948), pp. 115-16.

[3] There is, as a matter of fact, a distinct correlation between the propensity to strike and the average size of firm (by regions); but the correlation is evidently spurious and derives mainly from the fact that miners, who form the bulk of the strikers, work in large-scale establishments. A like correlation for mining only reveals no correspondence at all.

[4] In *Labour Management*, vol. XXVII, No. 282, p. 103.

[5] Cf. Sargant Florence, *Labour* (1949), p. 83.

[6] *Industrial Democracy* (1926 edn.), p. 355.

[7] *Economics of Fatigue and Unrest* (1924), p. 377.

Far too seldom, remarks a contemporary writer on Personnel Management,[1] 'do manual workers protest against the dirt, discomfort, and noise of work'. There have, of course, been 'safety strikes', notably of coal-miners; and it seems significant that one of the chief Trade Union arguments for pressing for wage increases is that technical changes have imposed increased responsibilities and nervous strains on workers: 'the widespread use of this argument is not usually appreciated.'[2] (One may instance here the claims for 'special allowances' or 'dirty money' for particularly unpleasant work.)

Thus many strikes, whatever their immediate cause, may be concealed protests against the character of industrial work. 'Oh, it's a gala time for you, the strike is', complains an embittered mother-in-law in D. H. Lawrence's story 'Strike-Pay':

> 'That's all men strike for, indeed. They enjoy themselves, they do that. Ripping and racing and drinking, from morn till night, my sirs! . . . Oh, it makes him bug, the strike does. See him land home after being out on the spree for hours, and gives his orders, my sirs! Oh, strike sets the men up, it does. Nothing have they to do but guzzle and gallivant to Nottingham. Their wives'll keep them, oh yes. So long as they get something to eat at home, what more do they want?'

Some strikes, particularly wartime strikes, are partly a reaction from overstrain and represent a concealed holiday: in the 1945 dockers' strike 'many of the 10,000 men who came out on strike probably treated the occasion as an opportunity for a few days' holiday'.[3] 'Playing' is an old euphemism for striking; American strikers have referred to themselves as 'vacationists': and Belgian miners have called their strikes 'pit holiday making'.[4] In 1940 450 workers at de Havilland's 'took an extended holiday' (*sic*) to enforce the reinstatement of a convenor of shop stewards; a 'holiday committee' was formed which approached Mr. Morrison to ask him to intervene with the management.[5] The fact that this motive is rarely explicit in strikes should not blind one to its operation.

Inferiority of worker's position

The worker's discontent may be intensified by his weakness in bargaining power. This in turn derives from his relative propertylessness: the disparity, which economists from Marx to Marshall have stressed, between the 'reserves' available to employers and workers; from the worker's lack of mobility; from his lack of knowledge of what his labour is really worth to his employer; from his liability to be dismissed at short notice;[6] and from his lack of control of the physi-

[1] NORTHCOTT, *Personnel Management* (1945), p. 212.
[2] DUNLOP, *The Movement of Real and Money Wage Rates, Economic Journal* (September 1938), pp. 424-5.
[3] *Economist* (March 10th, 1945), p. 309.
[4] The meaning of the Spanish term for 'strike' (*huelga*) is given in Appleton's dictionary as 'rest, repose, leisure, strike, recreation, merrymaking'. There are analogies in other languages.
[5] See *Labour Research* (1940), p. 142.
[6] 'There is no doubt that the fear of economic insecurity . . . is responsible for much of the present labour unrest in the industry', wrote the *Economist* of the 1945 dockers' strike; and the attitude of the Glasgow dockers early in 1946, when confronted with the 'redundancy' of 500 men, as well as the similar fear of depression which underlay the 1946 trawlermen's strike, reflected the persistence of such feelings of insecurity. (See *Report of Court of Inquiry under the* 1919 *Industrial Courts Act* (*Cmd.* 6882, 1946), p. 5.)

cal and mental stresses resulting from his work. Inferiority compensation, wrote Viteles,[1] 'finds its outstanding expression in the strike'.

Thus, strikes which challenge the 'rights of management' — e.g. on questions of dilution, dismissals and victimization, Trade Union principle, for the decasualization of an industry or against 'redundancy' — spring largely from this source. The worker's feeling of powerlessness may produce strikes on a wide range of immediate issues, and this explains to some extent why many strikes are carried on with more bitterness than the particular issue seems to demand. There is more at stake than the mere striking of a bargain:

> 'anyone who has ever been concerned in labor disputes [wrote Soule],[2] or has even read about them in the newspaper, knows that much more than this is involved. Some unions and employers do indeed try to act as if the process were the same as a purely rational and prosaic bargaining transaction between business buyers and sellers. But this conception of the affair has never really dominated the action of either side since the beginning of trade unionism, and even when it is approximated in outward appearance, the atmosphere of the relationship is charged with emotions which are far more like those of sovereign nations engaged in diplomacy or warfare than like those of tradesmen dickering over the price of potatoes.'

Labour conflicts appeal to 'loyalties and hatreds which go far deeper than the desire to gain or withhold a few cents an hour':

> 'In many countries the labor movement has been dominated by philosophies of social revolution, but even where this is not the case, as in the United States, the combatants have often behaved as if it were. Attempts to domesticate the relationship by reducing it to a rational business basis have been more successful in Britain and this country [the U.S.A.] than elsewhere, but even in these cases the influence of non-economic motives is too obvious to be ignored.'

Thus those who attempt to 'domesticate the relationship' by goodwill methods alone should be reminded that the causes of industrial unrest are not wholly in the realm of ideas: 'there are many difficulties which, though they can only be solved with good will, cannot be solved by it, and the industrial conflict is one of them.'[3]

Wage questions

A study of the attributed causes of strikes alone would lead one to underestimate the influence of the causes already discussed, and to overemphasize strictly monetary motives. Between January 1911 and June 1945, no less than 58.1 per cent of all strikes concerned wages, and these strikes accounted for 62.6 per cent of all workers directly involved. But this means no more than that a high proportion of strikes took the *form* of wage strikes. Since wages stand for more than can be bought with them, wage strikes tend to be symbolic of wider grievances.

[1] *Industrial Psychology* (1933), pp. 565-6.
[2] *The Strength of Nations* (1942), p. 187f.
[3] OGILVIE, *Industrial Conflict* (1926), p. 22.

This can be illustrated by the experience of many countries. 'Most of the formal demands of the strikers', wrote the sociologists of Yankee City,[1] 'concerned wages and the recognition of the union, but interviews with workers during and before the strike clearly showed that many of the basic grounds for discussion had little to do with the amount of wages received.' Wage demands, and the desire for a Union to raise and maintain them, were largely symbolic: 'the unions served as a composite symbol of protection for all those social values which were in themselves inexpressible as well as for the protection of reasonable wages.'

In Australia and New Zealand, certain pioneer organizations for arbitration and conciliation were evolved. These bodies, which were created to maintain industrial peace generally, developed quickly into wage-fixing bodies; but this development, to judge by the absence of instructions in the relevant Acts about the principles which were to guide arbitrators in making their wage decisions, seems to have been unexpected. It was only gradually realized that most industrial disputes apparently concerned wages. How far wages were the root of the trouble is, however, another question. As Burns has pointed out,[2] low wages are a relatively unimportant cause of active unrest; at any rate, the worst paid workers have usually neither organization, resources, nor energy for strikes;[3] 'the main causes of industrial unrest are more fundamental, and may be only slightly affected by adjustments of wages'. According to such a view it is the frustrations of modern industry which are the more fundamental causes, and wage regulation leaves these untouched.

Of course, wage strikes for the achievement of a bare subsistence, and wage strikes for the maintenance of existing standards, must presumably be considered as wage strikes 'proper', and unrest from this cause would presumably yield to wage regulation. But it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between these strikes and strikes for wages proportionate to 'what the trade can bear' or to the wages of other workers. These latter may derive from a desire for 'social justice'[4] or 'social recognition', and thus reflect the worker's feeling of inferiority rather than his poverty.

Similarly, high wages — as a means to the enjoyment of leisure — tend to be regarded, by workers themselves as well as by those who theorize about their motives, as the only possible compensation for the inevitable frustrations of working life:

> 'There are millions of miners, factory workers, clerks, dustmen, and others who perform the same operation tens or hundreds of times each day perhaps

[1] Warner and Low, op. cit., p. 131.

[2] *Wages and the State* (1926), pp. 19, 405. For an account of Australian experience, see Higgins, *A New Province for Law and Order* (1922).

[3] The strikes of such workers are sporadic; instance the dockers' and the match-girls' movements in the late nineteenth century, and that of the agricultural workers following the first world war.

[4] There have of course been instances where an interference with established wage differentials in the cause of industrial peace has provoked more unrest than it has cured. One may take the classic instance of 1917, when Mr. Churchill granted a 12½ per cent bonus to certain skilled engineering and foundry workers; and the 12½ per cent became in a short time 'an advance of wages which all trades claimed and many secured. Designed in the first place to allay unrest, this disturbance of comparative rates was a principal cause of much labour unrest' (*12th Report of Proceedings under the Conciliation Act,* 1896, *etc.* (1919), p. 40).

throughout their working lives. The operation each performs may provide interest and stimulus for the first day or week, but it soon becomes automatic, purposeless, and dull. Occasionally the man or woman concerned may give thought to the place of the operation in the main scheme of things, or be interested in his group, department, or company, and its success, but for hours and days on end he cannot with the best will in the world see beyond the hypnotic dullness of his job. The more intelligent inevitably tend to find dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction in their work, and there are many influences which conduce to a dislike of work which seems hardly to require human attributes. The mind, being unoccupied by the work, all too often becomes concerned with grievances, real or imaginary. . . .

'The inescapable conclusion is that for a repetition worker his real existence must lie in his so-called leisure hours, and if his work can be the means of providing a full, happy, and stimulating leisure life, then the work itself will begin to have purpose.

'If this argument be sound then we must not belittle but encourage and expand the application of money incentives in industry . . . for the millions of people whose work cannot give innate satisfaction, a money reward is the only real, sound, and indeed human incentive to greater output in that it is a primary help towards a fuller life.'[1]

Yet in so far as much industrial work exhausts people's creative impulses without satisfying them, to that extent it makes them incapable of living a 'full, happy and stimulating leisure life'. Of course, the 'expansion of the application of money incentives' — the reshuffling of wage differentials, the introduction of bonus systems and so on — has sometimes relieved the immediate symptoms of unrest, but it cannot wholly recoup the worker for his losses in other fields.

Thus the motives underlying strikes about wages are very mixed. It is partly for this reason that it is difficult to answer the classic question whether workers engaged in wages claims and disputes are primarily concerned with real wages or money wages. The question must however be faced.

The commonest assumption is that, since changes in real wages often take place imperceptibly while changes in money wages can never be unperceived, it is usually money wages that engage the workers' attention; and that even though a low *level* of real wages (i.e. of money wages relative to needs) may cause unrest, *fluctuations* in real wages are likely to obtrude themselves only after a time-lag, during which the cost of living has been steadily rising, or in periods of sudden inflation, accompanied perhaps by taxes on 'working class luxuries'.

It has naturally enough been at such times that proposals have been made for the stabilizing of real wages. The violent price changes characterizing the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and the course of the Napoleonic wars produced a number of summary arrangements and proposals, such as Gilbert's Act (1784) the Speenhamland system, Whitbread's proposals (1795, 1800 and 1807), and Joseph Lowe's suggestion of a cost of living sliding scale (1822); but the issue was obscured by the strong fluctuations which were taking place in money wages, and for a long time it was mainly economists who studied real wage fluctuations. Indeed, the maintenance of stable real wages was largely an

[1] A. G. Grant, letter to *The Times* (September 30th, 1947).

academic question until the end of the first world war, when the need to adjust wages to a rapidly rising cost of living compelled the public's attention. The fact that the Ministry of Labour cost of living index was based on evidence collected by the Board of Trade in 1904 indicates a very late awakening to the essence of the wages problem. Yet it has always been the cost of living which gives meaning to the money wage, and it is not surprising that the arguments of Trade Union officials on wages questions are by now frequently based on references to it.

The Trade Unions welcomed cost of living sliding scales on the ground that such automatic adjustments would leave the Unions free to concentrate on raising the level of real wages:

> 'The failure to distinguish between real wages and money wages has over and over again led the workers in the wrong direction, and the fact that a Cost of Living Sliding Scale does once and for all sweep out of the way the source of this confusion is the strongest argument in its favour. There is an end to all the fighting to keep money wages rising as prices rise, and all the efforts of Labour can be concentrated on raising real wages and so improving the standard of life of the workers.'[1]

In practice, however, for reasons sufficiently analysed by Pool,[2] cost of living sliding scales do not operate in this automatic fashion, and the fluctuations in their popularity have been an index of their shortcomings. In December 1920 they covered about 1¼ million workers, in August 1921 about 2¾ million and in July 1922 about 3 million. The inter-war depressions resulted in a drop to 2½ million in July 1925, and again to 1¼ million in July 1933. (At this time the effective coverage was more like ¾ to 1 million, since some of the scales had ceased to be operated after wages had fallen below some absolute minimum, or for other reasons.) Their coverage again rose characteristically during and after the second world war to some 2½ million. Real wage levels have so far proved too elusive to be stabilized by sliding scales, not only because of the inherent limitations of the mechanism, but partly also because traditional considerations of tactics interfere with its working.

But it is doubtful how far the consideration of real wages has, in the past, affected Trade Union policy. Even Dunlop,[3] who considered that real wage considerations were 'considerably more important than Mr. Keynes's position would admit', admitted that in his view they were 'less important than a survey of wage negotiations would indicate'; and the Unions seem to have been slower and weaker to react to cuts in real wages due to small rises in the cost of living than to cuts in money wages, whether the latter represented cuts in real wages or not. It is true that Unions have demanded wage increases as soon as the general state of trade and employment has seemed to offer a fair chance of success, and sometimes earlier, for tactical reasons; but, although their arguments have often been based on the 'reasonable' ground of rising living costs, it is doubtful whether the fall in real wage rates at the start of an upswing (due to the various factors

[1] T.U.C. & L.P., *Industrial Negotiations and Agreements* (1922), p. 44.
[2] See *Wage Policy in Relation to Industrial Fluctuations* (1938).
[3] *The Movement of Real and Money Wage Rates*, *Economic Journal* (September 1938), p. 428.

which make wages 'stickier' than prices, including the time lag in the operation of existing wage agreements, the notice required before they can be revised, and so on) is fully appreciated before the general improvement in trade indicates the possibility of getting increases. (There may of course, in fact, be no fall in real wages, since actual earnings, as distinct from rates, may rise substantially through overtime working or other causes. Moreover, family earnings may rise because employment improves.[1])

At the level of strikes, at any rate, Trade Unions seem to have reacted to the need for resisting a money wage decrease much more strongly than to the need for achieving a money wage increase to keep pace with the cost of living. Despite the fact that in times of rising prices employers will be more likely to afford a money wage increase than they will be likely to forgo a wage cut during a depression, and despite the fact that at the start of a depression real wages per employed worker may even be increasing, wage decrease strikes are considerably bigger in scale than wage increase strikes[2] — the scale of the strikes being some commentary on the degree of official backing they receive. Tactical considerations also have certainly operated here; wage cuts, if unchallenged, are infectious, and moreover 'a strong position against wage reductions may eliminate what would otherwise be two conflicts: an unsuccessful opposition to the reduction — for some resistance is demanded by the "politics" of trade-union organization — and a later struggle for the restoration. Better one fight than two.'[3]

Granting, however, for the sake of argument that real wage considerations have affected Trade Union strike policy to some extent, even if not to the extent which Trade Union argumentation would suggest, it seems probable *a priori* that they have affected the rank and file less. Evidence on this point is, however, scanty and inconclusive, and has therefore been relegated to an appendix to the present section.[4]

But there are signs of a new approach to the wages problem, the field of its solution shifting from industry to politics. The *impasse* of pre-Keynesian wage theory was illustrated by the rival arguments advanced by employers and workers. Employers would argue that wage-cutting in depression was desirable in the workers' own interest, since by reducing the cost of production it would help to raise the level of employment; workers resisted it on the ground that, on the contrary, wage-cutting could only reduce purchasing power and thus intensify the slump. Similarly during boom periods workers justified their pressure for higher wages partly on the ground that demand, and therefore employment, could be fully maintained only if wages kept pace with rising prices, while employers resisted it on the ground that wage increases would have the effect only of raising prices still further.

It is clear, however, that wage-reductions during slumps, and wage-increases during booms, tend to spread competitively and uncontrolledly; and both sides have begun to be influenced by the Keynesian argument in favour of a stable general level of money wages, the level of real wages being modified by State

[1] Conversely, a rise in real wage rates at the beginning of a depression may be offset by a fall in actual earnings owing to short time and unemployment.

[2] Number of workers directly involved per strike, 1911 to 1947: wage increase questions, 588; wage decrease questions, 2088.

[3] DUNLOP, op. cit.

[4] See pp. 226-8.

action to regulate consumption and investment. In so far as this were generally accepted, of course, wage-pressure (except in so far as it concerned wage-differentials) would tend to take quite another form, and the (hitherto) chief formal cause of strikes would be much reduced in relative importance.

Qualifying factors

We have discussed the remoter causes of strikes at some length because this is essential to the understanding of the immediate and attributed causes which we propose to examine in the following chapter. The importance of the remoter causes varies, of course, according to circumstances. In wartime, for example, when there is security of employment, when dismissal is subject to legal control, and when wages may be (sectionally at any rate) high, much of the economic compulsion to work, and the control which employers exercise through it, is gone. Indiscipline at such times had different roots; to some extent it is no more than the reaction from forced discipline at other times. Moreover, many people who would not otherwise work are conscripted into industry and may strongly resent factory conditions, even though they have no experience of collective action.

On the other hand, although workers are in a stronger bargaining position, and although all sorts of frictional troubles arise in industry owing to the distortion of the economy, the greater unity of purpose which may develop during a war has a strong effect on the expression of unrest. The political repression which is customary at such times serves the purpose of underlining the emergency of the situation as much as that of directly controlling the workers; totalitarian regimes, of course, continuously exploit the sense of national emergency in order to establish a lasting sense of common purpose.

It seems now to be understood that the allaying of industrial unrest in general, and strikes in particular, depends primarily upon securing people's conviction that there is no fundamental divergence of interest between employer and worker.[1] In the U.S.S.R., the official view of the whole social and economic order is invoked in the cause of industrial peace; in Britain special emphasis has been laid on the impropriety of strikes in nationalized industries.[2] It is not, of course, suggested that unrest can ever be wholly obviated — quarrels will arise in the happiest and most stable marriage of labour and management — but if a sense of common purpose (based on sentiments ranging from national loyalty to craft pride) can be achieved, and reinforced by a social policy of 'fair shares', then the 'class solidarity' which is the unifying force of industrial discontent can be to some extent broken down. In degree, this has been happening since 1939. While strikes are not by any means wholly avoided, they tend to be smaller and more sectional; and if the deeper causes of social unrest can be removed, the nature as well as the form of strikes will have changed.

[1] Cf. Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, Harvard Business School Research Division, 1945. See also the cruder formulations cited in Brady, *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* (1937), p. 341f.

[2] This has been made the theme of radio drama. Islwyn Williams's *Lightning Strike*, broadcast December 1947, pictured two lightning strikes in a Welsh pit in 1927 and 1947. The N.U.M. official (who had led the 1927 strike) is bitterly attacked by the 1947 strike leader (the son of an ex-blackleg of 1927) as a 'stooge of the Coal Board'; but for dramatic purposes the strike collapses after the workers have been politically convinced that nationalization has altered the rights and wrongs of striking.

APPENDIX A

'Interchangeability' of strikes and absenteeism as expressions of unrest

Because of the dearth of published figures and of field research, one cannot do much more than speculate on this question. Coal-mining is the only industry for which there are comprehensive (if imperfect) absenteeism figures; moreover, in many industries — particularly of course those characterized by seasonal and short-time working — unrest does not take the form of persistent absenteeism.

However, figures covering the end-period of the second world war suggest that strikes and absenteeism in coal-mining are to some extent 'interchangeable'.[1] For the purpose of the comparison the *voluntary absenteeism percentage* (i.e. the percentage of 'possible' manshifts lost through 'voluntary' absenteeism) was taken in conjuction with the *coal lost in strikes per worker employed* for the three years 1943-45 and in 25 separate colliery districts. These figures indicate the proportionate losses due to two forms of industrial unrest, and there seems to be some connexion between them — in that, irrespective of the differences between years and the differences between districts, if strike losses are high absenteeism losses tend to be low and *vice versa.*

Coal-mining: losses from absenteeism and from strikes, 1943-45

District	*Voluntary absenteeism percentage*			*Tons of coal lost in strikes per worker employed*		
	1943	1944	1945	1943	1944	1945
South Wales:	4.4	5.1	6.4	0.87	5.54	0.55
Fife & Clackmannan:	4.4	5.0	7.3	1.72	2.25	2.58
Lothians:	4.7	5.5	6.7	0.25	0.84	1.07
Lanarks.:	4.4	4.5	5.6	4.80	8.04	8.67
Ayr & Dumfries:	4.3	4.7	5.5	4.14	11.31	10.54
Lancs. & Cheshire:	7.4	8.1	9.6	3.56	3.24	1.52
Yorks. South:	5.9	6.7	9.0	2.45	11.80	1.49
Yorks. West:	5.6	6.4	7.9	0.74	7.97	1.09
North Wales:	4.3	4.5	5.7	0.07	2.02	0.43
Cumberland:	5.5	6.7	8.0	0.11	0.96	0.14
Forest of Dean:	4.5	5.2	6.4	0.14	0.14	0.00
Bristol:	1.8	2.5	3.2	0.00	0.00	0.00
Staffs. North:	10.3	11.7	13.7	0.07	1.32	0.02
Cannock Chase:	8.1	8.2	10.2	0.03	2.68	0.01
Staffs. South & Worcs.:	7.4	8.2	9.9	0.00	2.95	0.02
Salop:	5.8	6.1	7.6	0.19	0.91	0.00
Warwicks.:	7.5	8.0	9.3	1.50	0.28	0.22
Kent:	8.3	9.4	10.7	0.44	0.86	0.08
Northumberland:	2.6	3.1	4.2	0.63	0.47	0.30
Durham:	2.4	3.1	4.4	0.61	1.06	0.18
Derbys. North:	4.0	4.7	6.0	0.92	0.27	1.25
Notts.:	5.5	6.5	8.2	2.93	0.16	0.51
Derbys. South:	1.1	1.1	2.2	0.47	0.24	0.21
Leics.:	3.7	4.2	5.7	0.00	0.00	0.37
Somerset:	3.4	4.3	5.7	0.00	0.07	0.00

Source: *Ministry of Fuel and Power: Statistical Digest from* 1938 (*Cmd.* 6538), tables 16 and 17; *Statistical Digest* 1944 (*Cmd.* 6639), tables 55 and 65; *Supplement to Statistical Digest* 1945, tables 1, 9 and 15.

[1] Of course, where unrest is acute, it may take both forms. Apparently absenteeism showed no reduction at Grimethorpe during 1947 before the big strike in August, while the strike itself was the twenty-seventh since the beginning of the year.

The results of an analysis of the covariance of absenteeism losses (x) and strike losses (y) over these years and in these districts may be tabulated as follows:

	Degrees of freedom	x^2	y^2	xy
Between districts	24	400.20	365.95	− 1.52
Between years	2	56.17	35.83	− 4.65
Residual	48	(A) 5.00	(C) 142.28	(B) − 7.80
Total	74	461.37	544.06	− 13.97

$$\text{Estimate of } \beta = \frac{B}{A} = \frac{-7.80}{5.00} = -1.56$$

$$\text{Estimated variance of } \beta = \frac{1}{47}\left(\frac{C}{A} - \frac{B^2}{A^2}\right) = \cdot 5537$$

$$t = \frac{-1.56}{\sqrt{\cdot 5537}} = -2.095 \quad \text{(significant at 5 per cent).}$$

The general reduction in the loss due to strikes in wartime was accompanied by a big increase in absenteeism. Conversely, Professor Bowley, estimating in 1943 that the 2000 coal strikes during the previous four years had resulted in the aggregate loss of only three days' output, suggested that some of this loss was possibly offset by a reduction in absenteeism after the strikes had been settled.[1] (There is of course the further consideration that persistent absenteeism and stubborn strikes both involve serious losses of wages.)

APPENDIX B

Objectives of wage-strikes: real wages or money wages?

The statistics of wage-strikes, of course, relate solely to workers' reactions to prospective changes in money wages. The statistics distinguish between strikes for wage increases and strikes against wage decreases; the edges of these categories being unfortunately blurred by the classification 'other wage questions', which has perforce to be ignored. Now if money wages are stable while real wages are being depressed, what appear to be 'aggressive' strikes for money wage increases may be in fact 'defensive' strikes against real wage reductions. Conversely if real wages are stable while money wages are being depressed, what appear to be 'defensive' strikes against money wage reductions may be in fact 'aggressive' strikes for real wage increases. We may divide the period 1912-44 into years in which money wages rose and years in which money wages fell, the latter being marked by a preponderance of strikes against money wage decreases and the former by a preponderance of strikes for wage increases.[2]

[1] *Royal Economic Society Memorandum* No. 96 (October 1943).

[2] Of course wages do not rise and fall uniformly, and workers in some trades begin to strike against wage decreases before money wages as a whole decline; similarly striking for wage increases may develop before money wages as a whole have ceased to decline. In any case, wage decrease strikes may take place against the threat of a cut, before its actual imposition; and wage increase strikes may take place even though wages are still declining, if employment has begun to improve.

During twenty-two years of this period, money wages (viz. money wage *rates*[1]) rose. In nine of these years, real wages[2] fell; in the remaining thirteen they were either stable or rising. In five of the nine years in which real wages fell, the number of wage increase strikes was comparatively high (i.e. above the average number of such strikes in the years immediately preceding and following the year in question); but the number of wage increase strikes was also comparatively high in eight out of the thirteen years in which real wages did not fall. From this, it would not appear that a fall in real wages has any significant bearing on the comparative incidence of strikes for wage increases. (A similar result is obtained if the numbers of strikers are taken instead of the numbers of separate strikes.)

During the same period 1912-44 there were eleven years during which money wages declined. In three of these years, real wages fell; in eight they remained stable or rose. In two of the three years in which real wages fell, the number of wage decrease strikes was comparatively low (i.e. below the average number of such strikes in the preceding and following years); while in five of the eight years in which real wages did not fall the number of wage decrease strikes was comparatively high. Again it would appear that a decline in real wages had no effect on striking.

Obviously, however, a statistically-significant conclusion cannot be drawn from these figures. This negative result is possibly due, not only to the limitations of the statistics, but also to the fact that, as has been said, strikes about wages may be symbolic of other discontents.

In summary, we may suggest the following. (1) Arguments based on the level of real wages are relatively unimportant at the level of strikes, even though they may have some importance at the level of negotiation, since (*a*) a rise in real wages is less evident and 'tangible' than a rise in money wages, and (*b*) a fall in real wages, even where it is immediately apparent, is less likely than is a cut in money wages to be taken as a deliberate act of the employers and a 'thin end of the wedge' — and is therefore less likely to meet with immediate resistance. (2) If the size of strikes provides any indication of Trade Union attitudes, then it is noteworthy not only that (*a*) as has been pointed out, strikes against wage decreases are bigger than strikes for wage increases, but also that (*b*) wage decrease strikes in years when money wages are falling, but real wages are stable or rising, are bigger still in proportion to wage increase strikes in years when real wages are falling but money wages are stable or rising.[3] Thus it seems that cuts in money wages are resisted more fiercely even though real wages are rising than increases in money wages are demanded to keep pace with a fall in real wages.

1 *Ministry of Labour Gazette;* increases and decreases in weekly wage rates.

2 'Real wages': index of wage rates divided by old Ministry of Labour cost of living index. (Wage rates: index in *London and Cambridge Economic Service Bulletin* IV, vol. XXVI (November 18th, 1948), linked for earlier years with indices given in Layton and Crowther, *The Study of Prices* (1935), and in *Abstracts of Labour Statistics.*) This is a very crude measure; but a similar result was obtained — for a shorter period — by using Dunlop's estimates of real wage changes (*Economic Journal*, September 1938).

3 Years in which money wages fell but real wages remained stable or rose: number of workers directly involved per wage decrease strike: 1880. Years in which real wages fell but money wages remained stable or rose: number of workers directly involved per wage increase strike: 430.

The study of the question is somewhat hampered by the fact that figures of wage rates have to be used instead of those of earnings. Moreover, workers do, of course, measure their pay-packets by other criteria than those of real or even of money wages. They often think of their earnings in relation to the product which they make, and may press a wage claim if their productivity has risen — regardless of the fact that a considerable capital investment may have been needed to make this possible. Thus it is sometimes the level of earnings in relation to prices of products, or to profits, rather than the level of real or money wage rates, that has decided workers to press a claim. Recently, however, as has been said, there has been some tendency to transfer wage issues out of range of industrial conflict, by a policy of 'restraint' on specific wage claims and by pressing instead for State action in a wider sphere.

* * *

Section 5: Immediate causes of strikes

> 'This morning Will Rees went to work as usual. Instead of "Bomber" [his usual pit pony — 'the two were pals'] he was given Briton — a sturdy pony, but the two took an instant dislike to each other . . . He was then offered another horse named Boxer. "He is too high and gawky," said Will . . . Will walked to the cage and out of the pit — and the other ten hauliers followed . . . 150 tons of coal were lost.'
>
> *News Chronicle* (September 2nd, 1947).

We may now proceed to analyse the statistics of the immediate causes of strikes. Although few strikes have a single immediate cause, and it is therefore difficult to be certain of the main question at issue, the evidence indicates that strikes are taking place less and less on basic questions of wages and hours, and more on apparently minor questions of working arrangements. This is no doubt partly due to the extension of national negotiating machinery dealing with the basic questions.

Multiplicity of immediate causes

Many strikes take place on a multiplicity of immediate issues, the relative importance of which may change during the strike itself. 'We have been having hell on earth lately,' complained a telephone girl on strike to a *News Chronicle* reporter.[1] 'We are sixteen girls short and we have been unable to get relief. In addition to that, our junctions are terrible. They are nearly all out of order.' Moreover, continued the report, 'the telephonists allege that the pay is low compared with that of women workers in other jobs'.

It is therefore often hard to say what causes a strike; in practice, the cause may be no more than a last straw. The 1917 Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest,[2] commenting on the fact that South Wales miners had for some years

[1] *News Chronicle* (September 17th, 1947).
[2] *Cmd.* 8668, p. 22.

been ready to down tools on the slightest provocation, insisted that the disputes were not therefore necessarily trivial: 'often the immediate cause of an outbreak merely marks the culminating point of a series of troubles, most of which in themselves are of trifling importance, but the cumulative effect of which in view of the unfriendly relations between both parties, constitutes a serious menace to industrial peace.' 'No impartial student of strikes', wrote a research worker in this field in 1948, 'can fail to be impressed by the lack of correlation between the precipitating cause of a strike and the amount of feeling necessary to lead to such drastic action . . . the choice of a bone of contention, whether in industrial life or in personal relations or anywhere else in society, may often be almost accidental.'[1]

Quite full reports of strike causes are sometimes given in the Press, although these are often inadequate. Their inadequacy has, indeed, been ascribed to the native perversity of journalists; the T. & G.W.U. Report for 1936 (quoted in the *Record* for June 1937) maintained that 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to convey through the ordinary Press the real facts relative to any given situation. When we issue official statements the journalists seem to regard it as their duty to re-write the statements in such a manner that, very often, they no longer convey what we have attempted to issue to the members'. It may even be due, as Mr. Arthur Horner once suggested, to the machinations of 'some of the owners of the capitalist Press', who 'are prepared to incite the miners and to incite every other section of the workers so that they can demonstrate that nationalization is a failure'. It is more likely to be due, as Mr. A. J. Cummings countered,[2] to the fact that the task of discovering the truth was 'about as simple as opening an oyster with a finger and thumb'. As the National Union of Journalists stated in evidence before the Royal Commission on the Press,[3] Union officials and strike leaders tend to be unwilling to talk to the Press, and this is often true of employers' organizations also. The journalist is then reduced to getting his information from the rank and file who are not always clear in their own minds. At this level, it is the general bad feeling which is remembered rather than any particular precipitating cause. (A recent investigation into the causes of the national dispute of 1895 in the boot and shoe industry illustrates this: 'that bad relations were the cause of the matter can be seen in that people who lived through the time have now quite forgotten the *causes* of the strike. But every-

[1] MEREDITH, *The Psychological Aspect of Strikes*, *Penguin Parade* second series, No. II, p. 43. The P.E.P. broadsheet *Planning* (March 5th, 1948) cited a good case in point from a firm which had a number of severe strikes towards the end of the war: 'one of their worst strikes was ostensibly about a proposed reduction in rates of pay on a particular process. But the factory which housed the process under dispute was not the factory where the strike started. This latter factory had a foreman who was vindictive, and who frequently suspended and dismissed on rather slender charges. He was also guilty of suspending for more than three days, which is entirely against all practice and agreement in the industry. One morning he suddenly suspended a man five minutes after work had started. Within another five minutes his whole shop had come out. Not until two days later did the strike spread to the factory where the reduced rates of pay were to operate and to which the final strike claim was attached. It is all too usual to find histories of this sort behind industrial trouble.'

[2] *News Chronicle* (September 15th and 16th, 1947). Deliberately tendentious Press reports of strikes are less common in Britain than in the U.S.A. (see example quoted by BORING and others, *Introduction to Psychology* (New York, 1939), p. 22). Here, Press reports of strikes are generally unemotional, in recent years at any rate.

[3] *Memoranda of Evidence*, 1, p. 11 (1947).

one remembers the bitter feeling engendered and that it was "a very bad time". The only explanation put forward to us... was that it was all due to "awkwardness and devilment" on both sides.'[1])

The variety, multiplicity and apparent haphazardness of the immediate causes of strikes has therefore created formidable problems, not only of interpretation, but of classification. In 1900, for example, U.S.A. labour statistics[2] covered some 357 separate causes and combinations of causes, and even in 1942 they covered 17. In Britain the Ministry of Labour lists only nine:[3] wage increase questions; wage decrease questions; other wage questions; hours of labour; employment of particular classes or persons; other working arrangements, rules and discipline; Trade Union principle; sympathetic action; and miscellaneous. This method, however, necessarily involves a somewhat subjective selection of the main cause. One illustration will suffice.

The 1945 dockers' strike was classified among Principal Disputes in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* as having taken place on a wage increase. Barou[4] specified 'wage increase and improved working conditions'. *Labour Research*[5] pointed out that the sympathetic movement grew out of a dispute on a 'narrow issue' (which was settled before the strike assumed large proportions), and that its objectives were extended to include 'a new national day wage of 25/-, a 40-hour week, a fortnight's holiday with pay, and no more piecework . . . There has been great discontent in the docks for many months over three main subjects: delay by the employers in agreeing to a post-war decasualization scheme, harsh working of the disciplinary machinery, and, especially since VE-Day, rates of pay'. Thus even under the Ministry of Labour's summary classification, entries could be made under at least four headings (wage increase; hours of labour; other working arrangements, rules and discipline; and sympathetic action). It only needs to be added that 'the men's grievances appear to have crystallized more against the

[1] ELIZABETH BRUNNER, *The Origins of Industrial Peace: The Case of the British Boot and Shoe Industry, Oxford Economic Papers* (June 1949), p. 254. Again, for a variety of reasons, the precipitating cause of a strike may not emerge even if it is known. I have been told, by one who was involved, of a big engineering strike during the first world war, which was notable because no one would say what it was about. It was finally discovered (by 'pub-crawling') that the strike was occasioned by the putting up in the lavatories of a notice against malingering which was regarded as insultingly worded; but everyone had been too delicate to refer to the matter in public.

[2] Strikes only (not counting lockouts, which are listed separately): see *16th Annual Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Labor* (1901). The causes listed include for example: 'against sale of non-union cigars'; 'against employment of boy alleged to have been exposed to small-pox'; 'for better treatment'; 'for increase of wages, reduction of hours, time and a half for overtime, double time for Sundays and holidays, and against employment of non-union men'; 'for more feed for mules'; 'for regular payment and against employer's wife working in shop and acting as boss in his absence'; 'for admission of walking delegates and free beer during working hours'; and so on. In the same Report, the 20-year summary of all U.S.A. strikes includes strikes affecting some 117,000 establishments, under about 1400 separate headings; this summary occupies 22 pages, while a breakdown of the same strikes by 40 different industries occupies 42 pages; and all this before the perfection of the Hollerith system.

[3] Characteristic examples of issues falling under the various headings were given in the 1913 *Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs*, etc. (*Cd.* 7658), pp. 173-8.

[4] *British Trade Unions* (1947), p. 265.

[5] (1945), p. 173. The 'narrow issue' was 'a reasonable demand of no more than sixty men for a reasonable rate of pay for unloading pit props' (*Economist*, October 13th, 1945). The strike dragged on because the men's employers were not members of the local employers' organization.

Union than the employer';[1] which is hardly a question of 'Trade Union principle', and defies inclusion except under 'miscellaneous'.

In the Ministry of Labour's lists of Principal Disputes, however, strikes are sometimes ascribed to more than one cause, and some details are given. This treatment is interesting, not only because it is fuller but also because it illustrates the changing importance of different causes at different times.

If one chooses pairs of years which are broadly comparable — say 1913 and 1939, 1917 and 1943, 1919 and 1946, 1922 and 1932 — certain differences in strike causes may be observed which one cannot always dismiss as due to changed methods of classification. In 1939 as compared with 1913, for example, there was a marked proportionate increase in wage strikes on issues which could not be classified outright as 'wage increase' or 'wage decrease' questions. Demands for general increases were apparently giving place to more specific demands for the adjustment of comparatively minor wage anomalies; for instance, 'against the withdrawal of allowances for abnormal roof conditions' (coal-mining); 'against withholding the bonus from two men because of faulty piecework cards'; 'for bonus payment to workpeople absent on the day before a holiday'; 'dissatisfaction of colliers with travelling time allowance'; and so on. This change is probably due to the increasing complexity of systems of wage payment, and the tendency for major changes in wages to be negotiated at top level.

Other differences also appear: e.g. a marked proportionate decline in strikes for Trade Union recognition (1943 as against 1917); the emergence of 'inadequate consultation' as a cause of strikes in recent years; the emergence of 'systems of work measurement' — Bedaux, etc. — as a cause of strikes (1932 as against 1922); and so on.

There must of course be ambiguities of classification. Sometimes the immediate issue is really connected with wages, even if it seems to lend itself to classification under 'other working arrangements'; for example, protests against 'alleged bad material' in cotton spinning; objections to 'boring work' in mining (i.e. to losing earning time at the end of a shift by carrying out the boring in preparation for the next shift); and dissatisfaction at the 'discontinuance of calling up trainmen for early duties, men reporting late having been sent home with loss of pay'. The line of distinction between strikes on wage issues and strikes on working arrangements (which might not cause friction unless they affected wages) must often be difficult to draw.

These examples illustrate the difficulties of giving an accurate presentation of the immediate causes of strikes, even when these are known. The colourlessness of the official classification is the price the student has to pay for its continuity. When all qualifications have been made, however, the statistics of strike causes make sufficient sense in their context to warrant analysis. We shall start by considering fluctuations in strikes on wages and hours in relation to the fluctuations in the numbers of workers actually securing the adjustments aimed at; and then we shall pass to the consideration of the shift in strike causes away from these issues.

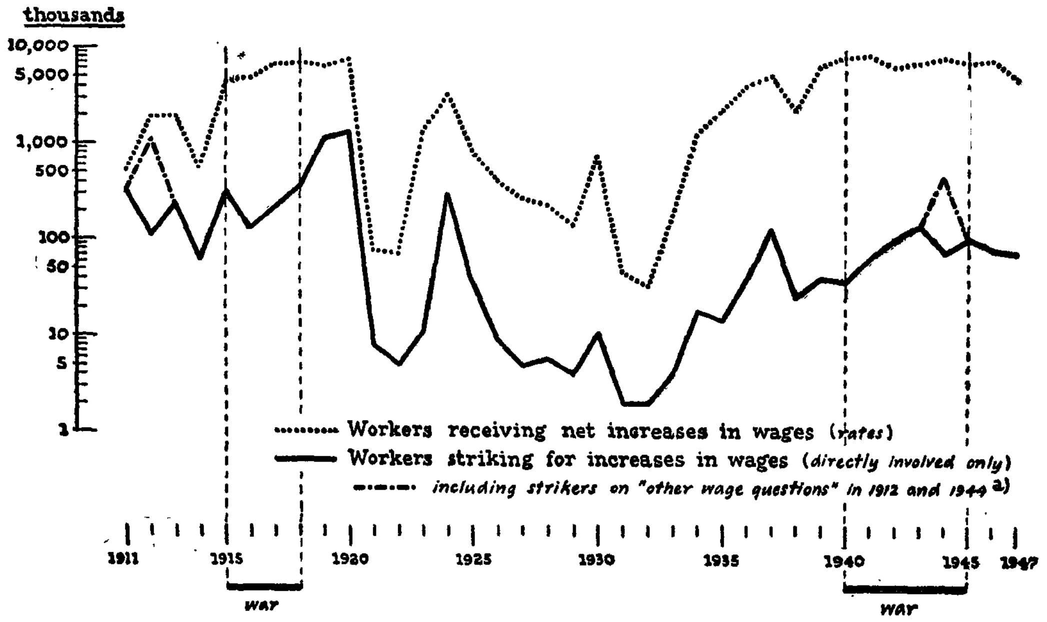
[1] *Economist* (October 20th, 1945).

Strikes on questions of wages and hours

(a) *Strikes on wage increase questions*[1]

If the yearly numbers of workers striking for wage increases are compared with the yearly numbers of workers actually receiving wage increases[2] the correspondence of the two curves is remarkable; for the inter-war years 1919 to 1939 the correlation coefficient was .917.[3] Yet by comparison with the number of workers securing wage increases, the number of strikers was very small and the number of successful strikers very much smaller.

Workers receiving, and striking for, wage increases



GRAPH 16

a] See p. 233 n.

Obviously it cannot be said that either curve determines the other (i.e. that wage increases in general are due to strikes or that they cause them), although there is clearly some interaction between the two. Sometimes the achievement of wage increases will seem to offer good prospects for striking in 'dissatisfied' industries, and the number of strikers will therefore rise. Sometimes again the fact that even unsuccessful strikes are taking place will have the effect of push-

[1] Strikes on wages questions cannot be broken down into wage increase and wage decrease strikes *by industries*.

[2] These figures relate to the *net* numbers of workers receiving wage increases (increases in wage rates): i.e. those workers who, even though their wages are changed more than once in the course of the year, are on balance better off at the end of the year than at the beginning. It is impossible to get a figure of the *gross* number of workers affected by wage increases, although the indications are that, as might be expected, the correspondence would be closer still if this figure were available. This can be seen if the figure of workers whose wages were increased and decreased by the same amount in the same year is added to the net figure (which gives a closer approximation to the gross figure).

[3] Similar connexions have been noticed before: Mr. Ramsay MacDonald introduced a booklet in 1913 (*The Social Unrest, Its Causes and Solution*) by a 'diagram showing the sympathetic relation between strikes and wages' from 1899 to 1912.

ing up wages in other trades where wage increases can be more easily afforded than sudden stoppages, and the number of workers receiving wage increases will rise in consequence.

Both curves, in effect, are indicative of the power of the workers (i.e. their economic power depending on the state of the labour market), and also of their militancy (i.e. their readiness to use the power they have). It is true that militancy, as well as actual power, is to some extent determined by economic conditions, albeit to a much less extent: the collapse in militancy immediately after 1926, for example, was hardly due to a decline in power caused by a deterioration in the workers' economic position.

The fact that the gap between the two curves widens over the period seems to indicate that the — usually slight — importance of *actual* strikes as levers for higher wages is declining, and that wages are being pushed up by 'peaceful' methods (including of course the *threat* of strikes) rather than by the actual use of the strike weapon. But it must also be remembered that, owing to the complexity of modern wage payment, some wage-increase and wage-decrease strikes fall under other headings such as 'hours of labour' or 'other wage questions'.[1]

(b) *Strikes on wage decrease questions*

If a similar comparison is made of the numbers of workers striking on wage decrease questions with the numbers of workers actually suffering wage decreases, the correspondence is much less marked.[2] Obviously wage decrease strikes differ from wage increase strikes in that they would not take place at all if no wage cut were imposed or threatened, and therefore one would expect the curve of workers suffering wage decreases to 'determine' the strike curve. To account for the lack of correspondence between the curves, however, one should remember that there is sometimes a lag between the threat of a cut, which causes the strike, and its imposition; that whereas in boom years workers react very strongly to the mere threat of a cut, in years of depression their capacity to strike is limited by unemployment, the choice being one between accepting the wage cut and accepting no wage at all; and that 'wage decreases' are often imposed, after a strike, in other forms (e.g. lengthening of hours, or intensification of work).

(c) *Strikes on questions of hours*

The figures of strikers on questions of hours of labour are not broken down according to 'hour increase' and 'hour decrease' strikes. Most workers affected by changes in hours over the period were affected by decreases; if the appropriate curves were plotted, it would be found that the curve of strikers would be rather more inclined to follow the curve of workers affected by decreases; so that most strikers were probably concerned with questions of decreases rather than increases.

[1] The 1912 miners' strike for a minimum wage was classified as concerning 'other wage questions'. However, Sir A. Markham, the coalowner and Liberal M.P., wrote in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1912 that 'the great mass of men came out in order to obtain higher wages, and for no other reason; and when they voted for the formula "minimum wage" nine-tenths did not know what they were voting for'. The 1944 strikes in the same industry, following the Porter Award, were also — many of them — classified as strikes on 'other wage questions', but were, in effect, wage-increase strikes.

[2] The curves are not of sufficient interest to be worth reproducing here.

Strikes about hours of labour are of various kinds: (*a*) for shortening of hours owing to sheer fatigue (relatively uncommon since 1919); (*b*) for rearrangement of working time, either purely for convenience, or occasionally for other reasons (e.g. in order that workers may be able to qualify for unemployment benefit, when short time is being worked); (*c*) concealed wage strikes of various kinds. These latter are probably the most common of all: in the words of the old American doggerel,

> 'Whether you work by the piece,
> Or work by the day,
> Decreasing the Hours,
> Increases the Pay.'[1]

Moreover, even where questions of hours are not concealed wage questions, they are often associated with wage questions as causes of strikes; and because wages and hours are so closely linked, it seems reasonable to consider them together, as 'basic issues', when dealing with the attributed causes of strikes in the following section.

Changing importance of main causes attributed

The nine causes of the Ministry of Labour's classification may now be grouped under three headings: (a) '*basic*' causes, covering all questions of wages and hours; (b) '*frictional*' causes, including the 'employment of certain classes or persons'[2] and 'other working arrangements, rules and discipline'; and (*c*) '*solidarity*' causes, which account for strikes on Trade Union principle and sympathetic strikes. ('Miscellaneous' causes — resulting in less than 1 per cent of all strikes and of workers involved — are also included under the last heading.) To call wages and hours 'basic' is not intended to imply that these things matter more to those concerned than anything else, but only that they involve economic questions more directly.

Strike causes before and after 1926

	Basic		*Frictional*		*Solidarity*		*All*	
Number of strikes (per year):								
1911–1925	617	(69%)	198	(22%)	83	(9%)	898	(100%)
1927–1947	543	(54%)	395	(39%)	66	(7%)	1004	(100%)
Thousands of workers directly involved (per year):								
1911–1925	618	(76%)	114	(13%)	89	(11%)	851	(100%)
1927–1947	188	(60%)	86	(27%)	41	(13%)	316	(100%)
Workers directly involved per strike (per year):								
1911–1925	1050		580		1070		950	
1927–1947	350		220		630		310	

[1] Strikes about decreases in hours bear, of course, a double character: while men may strike *for* shorter hours in order to gain a concealed wage increase, they also sometimes strike *against* an employer's proposal to shorten hours if this is tantamount to a wage-cut.

[2] Before the first world war, a large proportion of strikes on the 'employment of certain classes or persons' — somewhere near half — were concerned with reinstatement. Since then, however, reinstatement strikes have probably been proportionately fewer; but it is not possible to state this with certainty, since strike causes have not been broken down in detail as they were in the pre-1914 *Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs*.

Strikes on basic questions have declined in relative importance, and strikes on frictional issues have correspondingly increased. This is clear if the year 1926 is taken as a watershed.

(a) *Basic causes*

It is significant that wage-increase strikes in particular have shown a very marked decline.[1] This may be illustrated by taking strikes on basic issues, and wage-increase strikes, as a percentage of all strikes over comparable periods.

	(1) *All basic causes*		(2) *Wage increase only*	
	Strikes	*Strikers*	*Strikes*	*Strikers*
Pre-war periods	%	%	%	%
1911–14:	67.1	67.0	44.7	25.8
1936–39:	50.8	44.6	22.6	21.9
War periods				
1915–18:	72.3	65.8	58.6	49.3
1940–45*:	57.5	61.7	21.1	19.5
Post-war periods				
1919–20:	71.4	86.3	53.0	57.5
1945†–47*:	47.3	50.3	11.2	17.5

* January-June. † July-December. (So also in following tables.)

The relative decline in wage strikes is the more noteworthy if the absolute decline in the total number of strikers is also remembered. Wage increases are generally negotiated at national level, and it is now realized by the Unions that the strike 'is not an instrument by which the wages problem can be solved'.[2] Of course, other factors also — such as the changing industrial distribution of strikes — may contribute to the decline in strikes on basic issues.[3]

(b) *Frictional causes*

The corresponding increase in strikes from frictional causes — and particularly in strikes about 'working arrangements, rules and discipline' — is as follows (strikes on these issues being again taken as a percentage of all strikes):

	(1) *All frictional issues*		(2) *'Working arrangements etc.' only*	
Period	*Strikes*	*Strikers*	*Strikes*	*Strikers*
	%	%	%	%
1911–14:	22.6	10.3	5.9	5.0
1936–39:	37.5	32.3	12.0	10.9
1915–18:	20.1	22.1	5.0	3.4
1940–45*:	37.8	27.6	24.5	14.3
1919–20:	21.3	9.8	5.9	2.5
1945†–47*:	47.6	33.0	34.6	18.6

It is possibly the development of strikes about working arrangements, which appear superficially to be less 'fundamental' than other issues, that has led theorists to regard fuller joint consultation, improved welfare, a more astute or

[1] It should be re-emphasized, however, that some wage-increase strikes have been disguised, especially recently, as strikes on 'other wage questions'.

[2] ROBERTS, *Trade Unions in the New Era* (1947). The *Ministry of Labour Gazette* shows that between 1921 and 1939 nearly 95 per cent of 'gross weekly increases in wage rates' were not 'preceded by disputes causing a stoppage of work'.

[3] See appendix to this section.

enlightened industrial psychology, and so on, as panaceas for industrial unrest. It is certainly true, of course, that a number of what might be called 'amenity strikes' could be obviated by these methods. For example, 'Principal Disputes' are listed as having taken place because of dissatisfaction with the quality of the drinking water supply, because of the closing of a barber's shop on the firm's premises 'without prior consultation', because of the withdrawal of a tea break, because of an insistence that workers should submit to an eyesight test, because of the prosecution of dockers for stealing two apples, and so on.

It has, incidentally, been asserted that 'more than twice as many women as men have some grievance over labour arrangements';[1] but although the increased employment of women may have raised the propensity to strike on frictional issues, it is hardly possible to check this.

(c) *Solidarity causes*

Strikes from these causes may be similarly analysed, as a percentage of all strikes:

	(1) *All solidarity issues*		(2) *Trade Union principle only*	
Period	*Strikes* %	*Strikers* %	*Strikes* %	*Strikers* %
1911-14:	10.3	22.7	8.4	20.9
1936–39:	11.7	23.1	9.6	9.9
1915–18:	7.6	12.1	6.0	10.0
1940–45*:	4.7	10.7	2.3	2.7
1919–20:	7.3	3.9	4.7	1.2
1945†–47*:	5.1	16.7	3.1	6.5

The author of the article on strikes in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*[2] pointed out that the Trade Union issue 'enters more or less as a factor into a large number of disputes, most usually, however, as a secondary cause or object, so that it does not appear prominently in the tabulation of causes in the Board of Trade statistics, which is based on principal causes only.' Over the period, however, there has been a certain decline in strikes on Trade Union principle — or at least in strikes for the right to organize and for recognition: in proportion as the Unions have shown willingness to co-operate with employers, employers' attitudes have been encouraging. It is significant that the limited statistics of strike-results-by-causes show that between 1927 and 1939 the proportion of workers winning strikes on Trade Union principle was 66.2 per cent — a far higher proportion than for all other issues (16.3 per cent). (Even at the beginning of the century the percentage of workers' victories on this issue was remarked on as 'unusually high'.[3])

Even today, however, Trade Union recognition is by no means universal outside nationalized industries and there have been notable strikes on this question since the war — e.g. in the motor and catering trades in 1946. But the 1942 B.E.C.-T.U.C. draft of the Fair Wages Resolution and the 1946 F.B.I.-T.U.C. 'agreement' illustrate how far the Unions have been accepted by private employers. Strikes on 'Trade Union principle' are consequently

[1] *People in Production* (1942, Penguin edn.), p. 110.
[2] Vol. XXV, p. 1025.
[3] Brassey and Chapman, *Work and Wages* (1908), part II, p. 200.

changing their character, and are no longer strikes for the right to organize or for recognition so much as strikes concerned with the closed shop. This partially explains the recent rise in the proportion of such strikes.

Qualifying factors

We have seen from the statistics a definite shift in strike causes, which can be sufficiently well explained by events. Certain qualifications are, however, necessary. Although a smaller proportion of strikes is directly concerned with wages and hours, one must remember that under certain conditions strikes on other-than-basic issues may become a 'substitute' for strikes on basic issues. After the recent war, with a labour shortage, a Government enjoying more or less unqualified Trade Union support, and a difficult economic situation which it is 'sabotage' to aggravate, it is not surprising to find a decline in strikes on wages.

To some extent the situation has been like a continuation of war conditions. Between 1939 and 1945, the impropriety of wage strikes was continually stressed and long-premeditated strikes were out of the question since the Unions' hands were tied; but frictions continually arose on which workers felt themselves strongly placed to take strike action. Thus in wartime unrest on basic issues may appear in disguise; an increase in the number of strikes often means a disproportionate development of strikes on other questions, even if the real trouble is one of wages. Conversely in peacetime an increase in the number of strikes has tended to mean a disproportionate development of strikes on basic issues; such has been the standing dissatisfaction on these questions that workers have been inclined to strike first and foremost to remedy their basic working conditions whenever it seemed reasonable to strike at all.[1]

APPENDIX

Industrial incidence of strike causes

The following tables are based on *Ministry of Labour Gazette* figures which are available from 1925 to 1936.[2] Since, however, the 1926 figures are not generally comparable with other strike statistics, the first two years of the period were omitted. The figures thus relate to the period 1927-36.

Percentage of workers directly involved in strikes from different causes, by industries

	Basic	*Frictional*	*Solidarity*
Mining and quarrying:	54.0	26.8	19.2
Textiles:	81.9	16.4	1.7
Metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc.:	59.5	32.3	8.2
Transport:	34.2	55.7	10.1
Building, etc.:	69.1	23.0	7.9
Clothing:	49.1	25.6	25.3
Other industries:	74.9	17.2	7.9
All industries:	65.6	23.8	10.6

[1] If the *proportion of strikes on basic issues* is related to the *total number of strikes on all issues*, a rank correlation co-efficient of –0.866 is obtained for the ten war years 1915-18 and 1940-45; and of +0.348 for the remaining twenty-five years of the period, 1911-14 and 1919-39.

[2] It is possible, from the lists of 'Principal Disputes', to get an idea of the industrial incidence of strike causes for the whole period. Such an analysis shows that the falling off in the importance of strikes on basic questions after 1926 was most marked in mining and transport.

The relative propensity of strikers in the different industries to be involved in strikes on particular issues may be expressed as a ratio between the percentage of strikers in a particular industry who came out on a particular issue (as given in the above table) and the percentage of strikers in all *other* industries who were so involved.

Ratio illustrating relative propensity to strike on —

	Basic questions	*Frictional questions*	*Solidarity questions*
Mining and quarrying:	0.73	1.24	4.68
Textiles:	1.51	0.57	0.10
Metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc.:	0.90	1.37	0.77
Transport:	0.51	2.51	1.07
Building, etc.:	1.05	0.97	0.84
Clothing:	0.74	1.08	2.46
Other industries:	1.15	0.71	0.84

(*a*) *Basic issues.* The low figure for miners and the high figure for textile workers are peculiar to the period: many of the biggest wage strikes of miners had taken place in previous years, whereas the textile industry was feeling the full impact of the depression at the end of the 1920s.

(*b*) *Frictional issues.* A high figure for metal workers and especially for transport workers could be expected in any period, since in these trades working arrangements are subject to sharp changes (breaking down of jobs and dilution in engineering, alteration of schedules in road transport, and so on).

In the metal group strikes were as a whole relatively small during this period (workers per strike: metal 245, all industries 626).

In the transport group there were a few big 'frictional' strikes: e.g. the strike of some 13,000 London bus drivers and others in January 1933 against the speeding up of schedules, and of 5000 in July 1935. During these years, dissatisfaction on many frictional issues culminated in the busmen's 'Coronation' strike of 1937. This is an instance of the way in which dissatisfaction about working conditions may finally express itself as a 'basic' question of wages or hours.

(*c*) *Solidarity issues.* The traditional readiness of miners to strike on these issues emerges clearly. Characteristic are the big solidarity strikes in September 1935 of some 15,000 Glamorganshire miners, and in October of the same year of 55,000 miners from all parts of South Wales — also the strike of 22,000 Scottish miners in September 1936, against a refusal to allow food to be sent down to stay-down strikers.

The high figure for clothing workers is, however, remarkable. Strikes in the clothing industries are naturally small (1927-36, workers per strike: 178), owing to the small size of firms and the lack of organization: in 1939, less than a quarter of the workers in the industry were organized, outside the boot-and-shoe section. The marked relative propensity of clothing workers to strike for reasons of 'solidarity' may be a reaction to certain trends in the industry: mechanization (in particular, the introduction of Hoffman pressing machines and conveyor belts),[1] and the substitution of women for men at cut rates, impelling the

[1] GOLLAN (*Youth in British Industry* (1937), p. 107), writing of the 'constant "unofficial", "lightning", sometimes long-lasting strikes in various factories', stated that 'much of the workers' complaint is based on the use of the conveyor'.

workers to strike, where they struck at all, on the prime question of Trade Union principle and mutual support. Among the biggest strikes of clothing workers listed as Principal Disputes are strikes on these issues: e.g. the strike of 3,500 Leeds pressers and machinists in November 1927, and the sympathetic strike of Leeds workers in March 1936. Such strikes have been sometimes bitter and protracted: such was the strike in October 1928 of 500 London tailoresses, which lasted for 78 days and won the consent of the employers to the establishment of a Joint Consultative Committee.

CHAPTER V

CONSEQUENCES OF STRIKES

Section 1: Immediate results

'New Unionists no longer consider what material advantages were achieved when they estimate the results of one given strike. Statisticians waste their time computing how many strikes were lost and how many were won.'

Tridon, *The New Unionism* (New York, 1913), p. 31.

'The most important thing about a strike is the return to work — under what conditions, with what organization and spirit . . . Victory may be defined as securing a return to work on conditions favourable to the workers, with their organization and fighting spirit in a condition to carry on the struggle inside the factory.'

Mahon, *Trade Unionism* (1937), p. 43.

IT is pleasantly ironical that materialists should be so much absorbed in the search for spiritual values that it is left to others to waste time counting up the material results of strikes. Next to a study of their causes, the assessment of the results of strikes, whether in the short or long term, seems a question of the greatest practical interest and the most tantalizing theoretical difficulty. We must therefore examine (*a*) the meaning of the statistics, (*b*) their general movement, and (*c*) their association, such as it is, with those factors which may be assumed to influence strike results: unemployment, Trade Union organization and policy, and above all certain features of the strikes themselves — their length, size, frequency and so on. As far as possible, since the statistical evidence is so tenuous, technical details are reserved to appendices; and this section concludes with a discussion of some of the theoretical points involved.

Interpretation of the statistics

'No strike', wrote Eugene Debs in 1904, 'has ever been lost, and there can be no defeat for the labour movement. However disastrous the day of battle has been, it has been worth its price, and only the scars remain to bear testimony that the movement is invincible and that no mortal wound can be inflicted upon it.' Griffin quotes this passage and follows it up with another expressing a plain man's irritation and contempt for those who 'search for compensatory values in lost strikes'; but it is none the less true that — compensatory values apart — just as the statistics of the immediate causes of strikes may give a false picture of their origins, so the statistics of the immediate results of strikes may be a poor guide to their long-term effects; 'the long-run and short-run view stand in clear opposition to each other. Perhaps a strike won today is a job lost tomorrow . . . The statistician of strikes cannot wait until the long run has become the present.'[1] Indeed, the attribution of results to strikes is more difficult

[1] *Strikes* (New York, 1939), p. 89.

than the ascription of causes to them, for while causes lie in the field of history, results are in the realm of prophecy.

The available statistics comprise (*a*) statistics of the results of all strikes, by numbers of strikes and of workers directly involved, up to 1943; (*b*) statistics of the results of all strikes according to cause, from 1925 to 1939; and (*c*) statistics of the results of all strikes according to industry, from 1925 to 1936. Since 1943 all statistics of the results of strikes have been discontinued.[1]

The way in which results are classified is similar in all countries, although the conventions of classification may possibly have changed in the course of time. Most national statistics are classified under three heads: 'success', 'failure' and 'indeterminate' — 'réussites', 'échecs' and 'transactions' — 'settled in favour of workpeople', 'settled in favour of employers' and 'compromise' — and so on.[2] At first sight this classification appears to provide a cut-and-dried answer, at least in the short run, to the question 'Is the strike weapon effective?'[3] But unfortunately the standards against which success or failure have to be judged are vague[4] or arbitrary, which means, of course, that the category of compromise is also equivocal.

In most industrial bargains, the balance of advantage inclines the one way or the other, although 'as each set of negotiators has usually to secure ratification of the agreed terms by its constituents, the insertion of "face-saving" clauses is both natural and desirable'.[5] Thus in effect most compromises are more apparent than real, and one cannot, in analysing the statistics of strike-results, ignore the category of compromise altogether. It might seem more reasonable to try to apportion compromises to the one side or the other in accordance with some general assumption — for example, in proportion to the outright victories of the parties. Changing conditions, however, make it very unlikely that such 'concealed victories' will always be proportionate to outright victories, even supposing that one could say precisely what an 'outright victory' was.

[1] (*b*) and (*c*) are available by workers directly involved only.

[2] Swedish statistics adopt a fivefold classification of results ('wholly in employers' favour'; compromise 'mainly in employers' favour'; 'equal concessions'; compromise 'mainly in workers' favour'; and 'wholly in workers' favour'). American statistics present a sixfold classification, with a neutral category for strikes involving 'jurisdiction or rival unions'.

[3] A writer in the *Economist* of June 19th, 1926, for example, after analysing the results of some few very big strikes (involving 40,000 workers or more) was confident in asking Labour leaders to 'face facts' and 'frankly tell their rank and file the lessons which they reveal, namely that strikes do not pay'. This was probably too wishful a deduction, even in the post-war depression.

[4] Florence Peterson, *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin* No. 651, p. 66, points out that the concept of workers' victories 'is likely to be misleading in the case of defensive strikes, that is, strikes against wage decreases or hour increases. Even though such a strike is successful, it merely means a continuation of the *status quo* and not a betterment of employment conditions, as the term "substantial gains to workers" might imply. During some years, particularly in times of business depression, many of the strikes classified as resulting in substantial gains to workers were really only a successful staving off of less satisfactory conditions.' (Again, in demarcation disputes 'it would appear that the employer is passive — that it is a quarrel solely between worker groups who have no grievance against their employer'. Here, however, even if the employer is not directly interested in the victory of one Union or the other, 'the very fact that there are two rival unions fighting for control generally signifies discontent by one group of workers with the terms which the other union has obtained from the employer, and the hope that the second union can obtain better terms'. Ibid., pp. 5-6.)

[5] *Economist*, loc. cit.

The Ministry of Labour's classification was based on the extent to which the immediate result of a strike approximated to the workers' claims (or probably, in practice, on the extent to which the result approximated to the claims of whichever side was trying to alter the *status quo*).[1] If the results of strikes are considered in relation to the *status quo*, then any compromise which represents an improvement, however slight, in wages or conditions is a concealed workers' victory, while any compromise which represents a deterioration is a concealed employers' victory. Thus for example a compromise solution of a strike for a wage increase would count as a workers' victory, while a compromise solution of a strike against a wage decrease would count as an employers' victory.[2] But even if this summary treatment were judged desirable in respect of wage increase and wage decrease strikes, it is doubtful whether it should be applied to strikes of other kinds. If it were applied, it would assume not only (*a*) that *all* strikes, and not merely strikes about wages, are essentially either 'offensive' or 'defensive' in relation to the *status quo*,[3] but also (*b*) that the concealed successes of both parties in offensive and defensive strikes generally are proportionate to their concealed successes in offensive and defensive strikes about wages — which can neither be proved nor supposed likely *a priori*.

Dr. Forchheimer[4] has assumed, as a working hypothesis in dealing with the statistics of strike results, that compromises are generally favourable to the workers. He points out that both employers' victories and compromises react more to trade cycle movements than do workers' victories, and holds that since 'a part of workers' achievements seems to be brought about by compromises, therefore these are the inverse of employers' victories'. Thus, in order to be able to make an international comparison of workers' achievements in strikes, he adds compromises to workers' victories. One might, however, argue, as he admits in a footnote, that compromises should be considered as concealed employers' victories: 'on this view, while E + C (i.e. employers' victories + compromises) remains more or less constant as a proportion of all strikes, whether employers win outright (E) or indirectly (C) would depend on the state of the market'. In fact, for the reasons given above, neither of these assumptions seems adequate, and the existing classification must be taken as it stands.

While it may be true of strikes that *sub specie aeternitatis* none has ever been

[1] The awkwardness of using the *status quo* (i.e. the situation as it was before the dispute arose at all) as a standard is evident enough. At first sight it might seem preferable to judge results in relation to the *status nisi* (i.e. the situation which would have been created or perpetuated by the employers if the strike had not taken place), since this introduces a 'dynamic' element; but if this is done, all compromises will be 'concealed workers' victories' since they represent an improvement on the situation which would have obtained had no strike taken place. Thus one would count as a 'victory' every defeat which fell short of being a complete rout, and every surrender which was not wholly unconditional. In any case, since the statistics of strike results are not compiled according to this criterion it is inapplicable in an interpretation of them.

[2] As was evident from the discussion on strikes and the fluctuations of real and money wages, the question of assessing a 'real' improvement on the *status quo* is a complicated one, and for this purpose we have to be content to 'think in gold'. On non-wage issues the assessment of a 'real' improvement on the *status quo* would be even more difficult.

[3] On some issues other than wages (e.g. in some strikes for the right to organize) it would be easy enough to define the *status quo*; but on others (particularly questions of discipline, of alleged victimization, and matters on which there is no clearly-established precedent) it might be impossible.

[4] *Some International Aspects of the Strike Movement: The Results of Labour Disputes, Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* (September 1948), pp. 301, 303.

wholly lost, the statistics of their immediate results give a very different impres sion. For a long time now there has been a tendency for employers to win a growing proportion of strikes outright (the last figure available, that for 1943, amounting to 4/7ths of the total), and for compromises — despite the development of innumerable devices for co-operation in industrial relations — to be on the wane. This can be seen clearly from the graph on the next page.

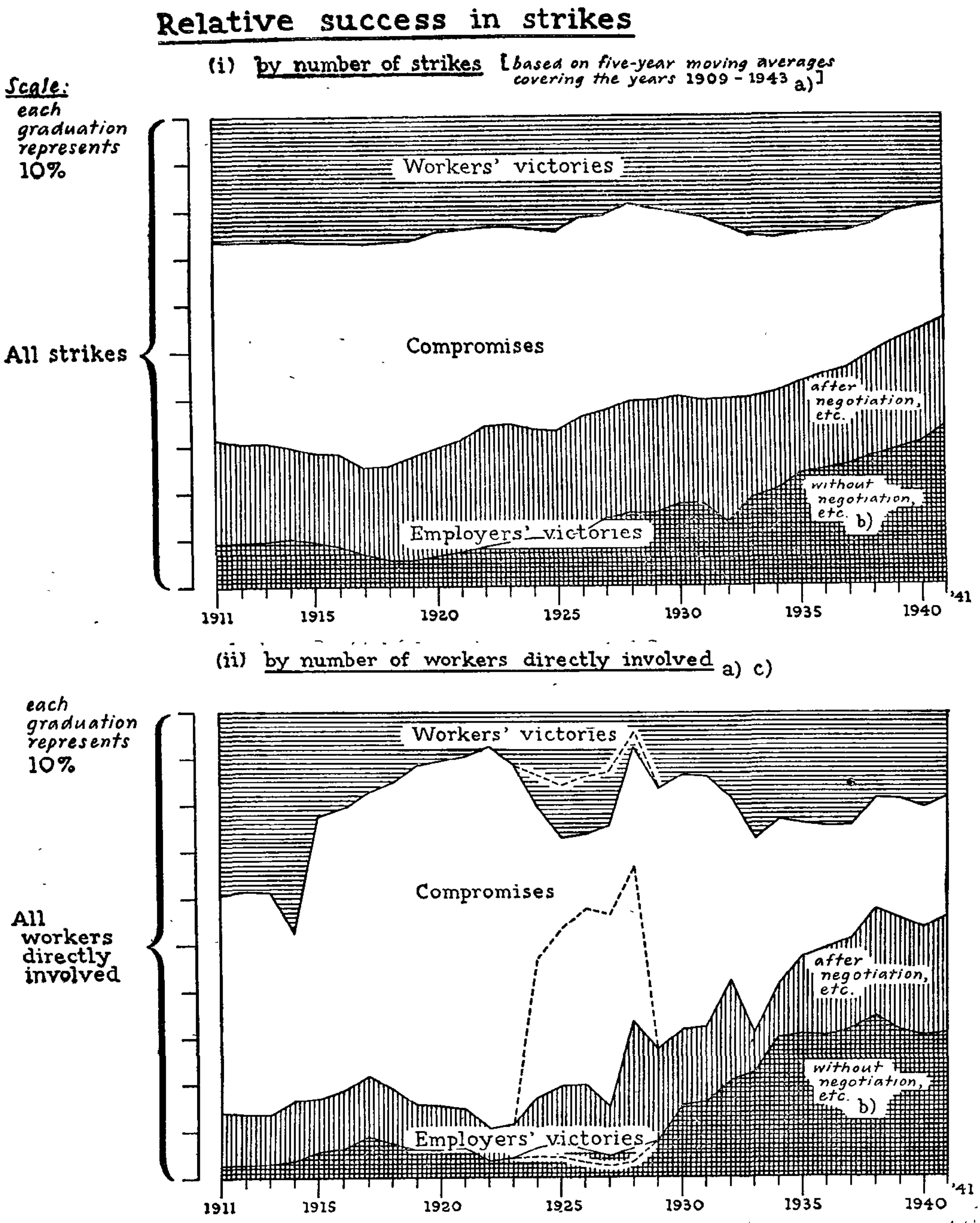
If we take comparable periods, these tendencies come out very sharply.[1]

	Strikes settled — (1) *In favour of workers*	(2) *By compromise*	(3) *In favour of employers*	(4) *On employers' terms without negotiation, etc. (included in* (3))
By number of strikes	%	%	%	%
1911–14	27	44	29	(9)
1936–39	25	28	47	(27)
1915–18	28	46	26	(8)
1940–43	17	25	58	(35)
By number of strikers				
1911–14	42	44	14	(3)
1936–39	19	25	56	(36)
1915–18	21	60	19	(6)
1940–43	17	26	57	(31)

If these figures were taken at their face value, as just an indication of the relative development of the strength of employers, the moral would be a depressing one for the workers; but the interpretation is hardly as simple as this. In the first place, any comparison of strike results over time assumes that the range of possible gains for the parties remains constant. This is not necessarily true; it might be argued, for instance, that employers' recent successes meant much less, all in all, than they did in earlier years when their proportion was lower.[2]

[1] It will be seen that there is a marked contrast in the development of results of strikes over the two war periods (i.e. 1915-18 as against 1911-14, and 1940-43 as against 1936-39). The proportions of workers' victories by workers involved show a much sharper decline over the first war period than during the second. This may be partly due to the fact that the proportion of workers striking for wage increases grew strongly during the first war, when prices were allowed to get out of hand — while during the second war it actually declined; and it will be seen from the limited statistics of strike-results-by-causes (p. 260) that a low proportion (9.8 per cent between 1927 and 1939) of workers striking for wage increases won their strikes. Conversely, the proportion of strikers on 'working arrangements, rules and discipline' declined during the first war but rose during the second — and a substantially higher proportion of workers striking on these issues won their strikes (47.1 per cent between 1927 and 1939).

[2] Again, it may be suggested that the classification of strike results has developed inconsistencies over time; for example, because of the growing practice of refusing to negotiate with men on strike. Thus even though such strikes affected subsequent negotiations, it might be thought that they would automatically be recorded as employers' victories. This, in fact, is not so. Strikes in which men return to work pending negotiations were classified according to the result of the subsequent negotiations; only where a strike interrupted negotiations already in progress was it automatically classified as unsuccessful. Even granted, however, that the conventions of classification may have been changing for other reasons, this seems unlikely to have been the sole cause of the trends mentioned.



Graph 17

a] No figures relating to the results of strikes *beginning in each year* were published after 1939. From 1940 to 1943 the only figures relate to strikes *ending in each month* (see main statistical appendix, p. 319). For the purposes of the graph the 1940-43 figures, whose 12-monthly totals fall short of those of the revised annual strike returns, were scaled to conform with these.

b] The figures of 'employers' victories without negotiation' are taken from the statistics of Methods of Settlement of Disputes. They exclude strikes settled by negotiation, conciliation, or arbitration procedures (as well as by closing of works and replacement of workers) and represent a 'hard core' of employers' victories.

c] From 1924 to 1928 inclusive, *four*-year moving averages were taken in order to exclude the exceptional year 1926. The dotted lines, however, show the course of the five-year moving average including 1926 – the figures being affected by the national coal strike (but not the General Strike) of that year.

Naturally the statistics provide no guide to the importance of the gains, but only to the number of 'victories'.

Again, the decline in the proportion of strikes settled by compromise may be ascribed to the development of the machinery of 'peaceful' settlement, in so far as strikes are altogether obviated when compromise is readily attainable. Thus the development of 'peaceful' compromise would be reflected in a decline in the proportion of *strikes* compromised. Moreover, the rising proportion of employers' victories in strikes might theoretically be explained away similarly, by pointing out that many questions which would previously have resulted in strikes are settled out of court in the workers' favour — and thus the development of 'peaceful' workers' victories is answered by a proportionate growth of employers' victories in strikes. It can be argued that over recent years at least workers' bargaining power has strongly increased; and to this extent strike results give little indication of the actual strength of the parties.[1]

Certainly, in circumstances like those of today, production can be interrupted more thoroughly and easily than ever before in British industrial history; and in this sense the workers' bargaining power is so great that the threat of a strike may appear more cogent than the strike itself — more cogent, at any rate, than the apparent achievements of strikes would seem to warrant. Concessions may thus be extorted largely by threats alone, implicit or explicit, and the strikes which do take place may be increasingly 'marginal', in the sense that they are generally speaking those which are judged likely to be relatively harmless economically — in the long term and from the employers' standpoint — even though the short-term inconvenience they may cause may seem a useful weapon from the workers' standpoint.

But although workers' bargaining power may recently have increased, and the rising proportion of employers' victories may therefore have given a false impression of their strength since, say, 1940, this cannot be said of the previous period. During the inter-war years the workers' bargaining power was at a low ebb, and the growth of employers' victories at that time probably represented a real growth in their strength.

We must therefore consider possible influences on strike results in greater detail.

Some possible influences on the results of strikes

(a) *Unemployment*

It has already been suggested that unemployment affects the frequency of strikes; and it might also be expected to affect their results. Unemployment acts as a deterrent from striking presumably because workers are more afraid of losing a strike at a time when employers are more easily able to replace them, are less affected by prolonged stoppages, and may even be prepared to close their works.

Not, of course, that these devices are in fact resorted to on a big scale. The statistics of Methods of Settlement of Disputes show that the number of workers replaced rarely exceeds 1000 in any one year, and in no year between 1911 and 1939 did it amount to as much as 2 per cent of all strikers (over the period as a

[1] See also p. 254, for further possible explanations of employers' victories.

whole it was far less than 1 per cent).[1] In small strikes, however, the replacement of workers is by no means unknown; about 5 per cent of all strikes during the period were settled in this way, and the proportion rose to as much as 10 per cent in the depression year 1932. However, these figures exclude the most important instances in point, those of individual victimization. One should not underestimate the accentuation of psychological insecurity at a time of heavy unemployment by the fear of victimization; for although, no doubt, victimization has 'long since' been discarded by employers' associations 'as a policy',[2] yet it has sometimes been widespread, and from earliest times Unions have made special provisions against it.

It may be argued, of course, that it is precisely the deterrent effect of these possibilities that has precluded the need to exploit them very much in practice, and that many strikes have been prevented from taking place because of the *fear* of victimization. Yet one might still expect the strengthening of the employers' bargaining position in time of depression to be reflected in an increased proportion of outright victories in the strikes which do take place.

The evidence does not, however, enable one to assert this conclusively. The period 1911-43[3] might, for example, be divided into years when unemployment was relatively high and years when it was relatively low (according as it fell above or below the median), and the percentages of strikes settled in different ways might be calculated for each set of years. In the years of high unemployment the proportion of strikes won outright by the employers was, in fact, slightly bigger than in the other years; the proportion of strikes won outright by the workers, as well as the proportion of strikes compromised, being correspondingly smaller. (Moreover, to judge from a corresponding analysis of the *average size of strikes*, employers won bigger strikes in depression years than at other times; and compromised strikes, which may be reckoned as 'concealed employers' victories' in so far as the strikes were 'defensive' in character, were also bigger in depression years.) But the evidence is not generally speaking of statistical significance, even though the picture confirms what one would expect.[4]

An industrial breakdown of strike results is also possible, by workers directly involved only, from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s; but this is also disappointing. Most of these years were years of severe unemployment; but rises in the unemployment percentage bore little relation either to rises in the percentage of employers' victories (except possibly in transport), or to falls in the percentage of workers' victories (except perhaps in building, where the proportion of compromises rises to some extent with the unemployment percentage). Neither were high proportions of employers' victories nor low proportions of workers' victories associated with industries suffering from a high level of unemployment.

(b) *Trade Union organization and policy*

The inconclusiveness of the above is no doubt partly due to the importance of other factors such as the degree of Trade Union organization prevailing.

[1] Highest proportions: 1915, 1.5 per cent; 1925, 1.5 per cent; 1932, 1.2 per cent; 1934, 1.8 per cent. The closing of works is even rarer.

[2] P.E.P., *British Trade Unionism* (1948), p. 132.

[3] Excluding the war years, when unemployment was obviously not a determinant of strike results.

[4] The more refined method used in Appendix A to this section does not confirm this; but again the figures are not statistically significant.

Strikers in the mining industry, for example, which suffered most severely from unemployment between 1927 and 1936 (unemployment percentage, 24.2 per cent) won a fairly high proportion of strikes (workers' victories, 23.6 per cent) and lost by no means the highest proportion (employers' victories, 39.1 per cent): the miners being the most highly organized of all the industrial groups (over 80 per cent organized in 1939). Their relative success in strikes may also have been connected with the type of issue on which they took strike action — a point which is discussed below — but this itself might have been associated with the strength of mining Trade Unionism.

If accurate figures of the degree of Trade Union organization were available, it might even be found that, over the period as a whole, strikers were more apt to win strikes where they were well organized than to lose them because their industry was afflicted by heavy unemployment. At any rate, Barou's tentative figures of 'Trade Union density' for 1939[1] do not contradict such a view.

The question is, of course, not solely one of Trade Union membership. Trade Union policy is of obvious importance, and here we are at once in the realm of imponderables. It was suggested in 1939 by *Labour Research*, in comment on the Ministry of Labour's annual review of disputes, that there was 'evidently some connection' between the lack of official support for strikes and their failure; and moreover that the fall in the number of strikes did not reflect success by more peaceful methods, since the main outstanding claims of the workers had remained unsatisfied.[2] The strike-shyness of many Unions since 1926 may have affected the results of strikes, particularly in so far as the lack of Trade Union backing has meant that strikes have tended to become smaller. This aspect — the relation of strike results to the character of the strikes themselves, to their length, size and frequency — must next be considered. (The evidence is briefly summarized here; a fuller account is appended at the end of the chapter.)

(c) *Character of strikes; length, size and frequency*

Length

It appears that, between 1911 and 1938, years with a high[3] percentage of employers' victories were marked by a slightly lower proportion of short strikes than other years; and years with a high proportion of compromises, as well as years with a high percentage of workers' victories, had a somewhat higher proportion of short strikes. However, it is only in respect of employers' victories that the *prima facie* impression—it is no more—is confirmed by further analysis.[4] Here, the evidence does something to confirm the common-sense view that employers tend to win long strikes;[5] and we shall have occasion to revert to this point shortly.

[1] *British Trade Unions* (1947), p. 248.

[2] *Labour Research* (1939), p. 158. Professor H. L. Moore was able, on the basis of United States statistics, to trace some connexion between the Trade Union 'ordering' of strikes and their success (quoted by P. SARGANT FLORENCE, *The Statistical Method in Economics and Political Science* (1929), pp. 131-5, 142-3).

[3] The term 'high' relates to the experience of *the current five years only:* see p. 256.

[4] See p. 259.

[5] It is of interest to note in passing that Swedish labour may be to some extent an exception, since 'there is no doubt that, generally speaking, the effectiveness of "aggressive" strikes in Sweden improves with increasing duration' (K. FORCHHEIMER, *Some International Aspects of Strikes* (3rd article), *Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin* (September 1949), p. 286).

Size

If the size of strikes is related in the same way to strike results, then it appears that years characterized by a high proportion of workers' victories, as well as years characterized by a high proportion of compromises, have on the whole been marked by a lower proportion of small strikes than other years; while conversely years with a high proportion of employers' victories have had a higher proportion of small strikes. Thus on the whole, as might be expected *a priori*, bigger strikes seem to have been won by the workers or compromised to a greater extent than small strikes.

Frequency

If the number of strikes is similarly related to strike results, it appears that when a high proportion of strikes are won by the employers, there are on the whole fewer strikes than in other years.

To summarize, one may say that there is a *prima facie* indication that, when there has been a high proportion of employers' victories in strikes, the strikes have tended to be few, small and long; and when there has been a high proportion of workers' victories or of compromises, strikes have tended to be numerous, big and short. More cannot be asserted; for when the evidence is examined the differences are mostly too slight to be of statistical significance. There are, of course, many other features of strikes which may affect their results — for instance, their causes, the methods by which they are settled, and even their industrial distribution; but the consideration of these, because information is scanty, is relegated to an appendix.[1] We are compelled to leave the statistical evidence here, and to consider the determination of strike results from a more abstract standpoint.

A theoretical approach to strike results

> 'To fight out to the bitter end can only mean going back upon the employers' terms.'
>
> Hicks, *The Theory of Wages* (1932), p. 145.
>
> ' "Sorry," shouted John Wharmby, much elated, "we oughtna ter go back under a twenty-per-zent rise." "We should get it," said Chris. "An' easy. They can do nowt biout us, we'n on'y ter stop out long enough." "I'm willin'," said Sam, and there was a laugh . . . "We'n on'y ter stick out, an' we s'll see who's gaffer".'
>
> D. H. Lawrence, *Strike-Pay*.
>
> 'The strike, like its rare complement the lockout, is a game at which both sides generally lose, and often enough they know they will lose. A short sharp strike can score a real win; but in the long drawn out strike the fruits of victory rot.'
>
> John Hilton, in *Industrial and Labour Relations in Great Britain* (a symposium) (New York 1939), p. 95.

In strikes, as in other kinds of warfare, the question often is not so much whether one will lose or gain by fighting as whether one will lose more or less

[1] See pp. 260-2.

than one would have lost by remaining at peace. The results of strikes might seem to depend primarily upon the staying power of the parties — staying power meaning the capacity to endure temporary 'war losses', and the losses depending partly on the length of the 'war'. Thus it is not surprising to find a theoretical approach to strike results based on considerations of the length of strikes.

Almost alone among economists,[1] Professor Hicks once attempted, in his *Theory of Wages*, a theory of strikes. He suggested the existence of a direct relation between the results of strikes and their length. A strike, he began, is generally caused by 'ignorance by one side of the other's dispositions' (i.e. of its real bargaining power), which results in the over-hasty breaking off of negotiations. The development of the machinery of conciliation should therefore be able to prevent many strikes by providing opportunities for the mutual assessment of real bargaining power. Strikes may also be undertaken in order to 'keep the Union in training',[2] since a Union which never strikes weakens the effectiveness of its threats. Lastly, strikes may occur because of a lack of confidence in Union leadership: 'probably conciliation actually increases this evil; the closer the contact between Union officials and employers, the more the officials become negotiators instead of agitators, the easier it is to persuade the ordinary member that his interests are being neglected.'

The root of the theory, however, lies in Hicks's analysis of the real bargaining power of the two sides in negotiation (an analysis which was selected by Hogben[3] as the target for a heavy barrage against the traditional methodology of economics). His conclusion was that strikes generally, and particularly long strikes, are likely to achieve results inferior to the results of negotiation backed with the threat of a strike (all negotiations being assumed to be backed by such a threat, implicit or explicit, just as all diplomacy, in Hawtrey's phrase, is potential war). The employers' willingness to concede a higher wage and the Trade Union's willingness to abate its demands was held to depend to a significant extent upon the expected *length* of the threatened strike. The amount the employers were prepared to concede varied according to the expected cost of the strike: the longer they expected the strike to continue, the more they were prepared to concede — on a rising asymptotic curve, up to the point where their concession would force them out of business. The amount by which the workers were prepared to abate their claims varied, conversely, according to the cost to them of being temporarily unemployed: thus the longer they expected the strike to continue, the more they were prepared to abate their claims — down to the point when they were no longer in a position to claim any more than the employer would have paid without pressure.[4] The 'employer's concession curve' and the 'Union's resistance curve' could be diagrammatically represented, and would cut on a level which represented the highest wages achievable by negotiation —

[1] PIGOU (*Principles and Methods of Industrial Peace*, 1905) attempted a schematic analysis of the motives operating in industrial disputes.

[2] Or, no doubt, as part of the strategy of organizing unorganized trades.

[3] See Prolegomena to *Political Arithmetic* (1938), p. 26f.

[4] Cases have been known where, 'anticipating a long strike, the men resolved not to accept dispute pay for the first two or three weeks' (CLEM EDWARDS, *The Lock-out in the Coal Trade*, *Economic Journal* (December 1893), p. 653). But this does not, of course, invalidate Hicks's general point.

and there is a 'general presumption that it will be possible to get more favourable terms by negotiating than by striking'.[1]

This is given particular force since, if both sides are determined on a trial of strength, the workers tend to weaken quicker than the employer because their reserves are smaller. It seems, however, too much to say that 'to fight out to the bitter end can only mean going back on the employer's terms'. This was true of the 1927 coal strike, but not of that of 1912; the end may sometimes be bitter for the employers — particularly perhaps if the men can secure widespread conviction of the soundness of their case.

However, despite the strictures of Hogben, the analysis has interest as an interpretation of one set of considerations actuating employers and workers in negotiations.[2] Professor Sumner Slichter[3] has emphasized that the willingness of each side to endure a stoppage is by far the most important element in its bargaining power; and in any dispute, both sides will probably base their 'willingness' to fight on some assessment of their capacity to fight — i.e. of the relative costs of resistance and concession. But in practice such assessments, if they are accurate, are likely to be so more by accident than by intention. For two accurate assessments imply that each side really does know its own and the other's strength, which will mean, generally, (i) that each side knows its own real strength and neither has chosen to exaggerate it, (ii) that each side believes the other, and (iii) that each side can forecast the reserves of strength which will accrue to both in the course of a possible struggle. 'We were sort of playing a game', said an American of a silk workers' strike of 1913, 'between how much they could get done in Pennsylvania, balanced against the demand for silk and the fear of bankruptcy. We had no means of telling that, except by guesswork.'[4]

Two further factors make it difficult to test Hicks's theory, or even to apply it to actual practice. These are the element of bluff and the changed character of strikes.

Difficulties: (a) *the element of bluff*

Indeed, (i) and (ii) alone are a great deal to ask of human beings. Not only are these Utopian conditions not fulfilled when negotiations break down and a strike ensues through 'ignorance by one side of the other's dispositions', but it is questionable whether they are very often fulfilled in the case of negotiations which do not break down. Nor will the existence of conciliation machinery

[1] This assumes, of course, that the employer is willing to negotiate. In the case of a wage decrease, however, the employer may sometimes merely give formal notice of his intention of reducing wages from a certain date, and in such cases it may be necessary to call a strike in order to induce the employer to negotiate at all.

[2] Even among those who acknowledge the shadowy existence of Economic Man, and permit him to produce, invest and consume, many deny him the right to strike, on the grounds that no strike is actuated by anything but spiritual or psychological maladjustment. 'The middle class conception of labour unrest', wrote Sargant Florence, 'is of some sinister infection, elusive and intangible.'

[3] *The Challenge of Industrial Relations* (New York, 1947), p. 127. Slichter summarized Hicks's argument by remarking that 'if each side knew accurately the other side's willingness to fight, there would never be a strike or a lockout. Disputes would be settled on the terms which equated the willingness of the two sides to stand a shutdown' (p. 128). But he approved, within certain limits, of the inflation of demands by both sides: 'both unions and employers should suggest more than they might be willing to accept' — in order that a 'fair compromise' should be reached by negotiation (p. 142).

[4] Quoted in HILLER, *The Strike* (1928), p. 129.

necessarily dispel an ignorance which it may be to the interest of the parties to perpetuate. No two powers engaged in diplomacy, unless perhaps they are conniving against a third, will reveal the exact level of their armaments if they can help it, because of the greater advantage which may be gained by successful bluff. Successful bluff is by definition bluff which achieves its object without having to be called. True, one party may choose to reveal its real strength if it feels overwhelmingly the stronger; but in such a case the other party may treat the revelation as a bluff commensurate with its own. For this reason not only will the original demands of the disputants differ more or less widely, but for either side to modify them too quickly will give a demoralizing and damaging impression of weakness; while to allow negotiations to drag on too long without a showdown may also — morale and prestige apart — materially worsen the position. Hence the deadlock in negotiations, and hence the precipitancy of a strike.

It has often been suggested that the element of bluff should be reduced by a fuller disclosure of facts. Thus

> 'Sir Walter (now Lord) Citrine stated in evidence to the Cohen Committee: "We deem it essential, if we are to deal intelligently with claims for increases of wages or improvements in conditions of employment, to know as much as possible about the companies or the employer with whom we are dealing" ... But when Sir Walter Citrine goes on to argue that more information made available to the T.U.C. would help them to "educate our own members to take a realistic perspective and not always to assume that somewhere there is a vast volume of profits which has been hidden up somebody's sleeve", he is directly contradicted by the Potters' Union which ... pressed for better costings and statistics for precisely the opposite reason, namely that it would *raise* wage rates! One is inclined to think that the Potters' Union is more right in their assessment of the effects of full disclosure of "all the facts" than Lord Citrine. After all, the effect must be to make known to the Unions the employers' upper sticking-point and thus enable them to fix wages at a higher point than if they had been ignorant of the location of that point.'[1]

In theory, this would deprive the employer, partly at least, of the power of bluffing, though not of calling the Trade Unions' bluff; and thus, although it might or might not result in a better bargain, it would not necessarily prevent strikes.

If one or both sides persist in bluffing, of course the two theoretical curves of 'employer's concession' and 'Union's resistance' do not meet; and the deadlock is broken only by a strike which alone can expose (or justify) the bluff. At this point, however, Hicks's argument that better results were probably obtainable by negotiation than by striking, even granted its assumptions, seems to depend on a further assumption that the employer will be able and willing progressively to cut his losses and that the worker will not. 'Once a strike has begun, all he' (i.e. the employer) 'can buy off is the remainder of the strike; the loss incurred as a result of the stoppage which has already taken place is a "bygone" — nothing can now be done about it.' But the workers are not able to regard their sacrifices as a 'bygone': 'once a strike has lasted (say) two weeks, the power of the Union

[1] SINGER, *Wage Policy in Full Employment*, *Economic Journal* (December 1947), p. 451.

to last out a further five weeks is less than its power to last out five weeks at the beginning of the stoppage.' Thus the employer is held to budget for his losses while they are only in prospect, but to be able to ignore them as soon as they have actually been incurred — an advantage which is denied to the workers.

It is probably true that even after the strike has begun, calculations based on the expected cost of the strike to each party may nevertheless continue to operate if there seems to be a chance of a negotiated peace. But either or both sides may play for an unconditional surrender, whereby they will hope to recoup losses which they would never have incurred had they been soberly calculating on the prospects of negotiation.[1] In such cases each side assumes that it can outlast the other and force a complete capitulation, or at least a compromise much more favourable than could have been obtained earlier. Strikes have achieved such results for workers as well as for employers; strikes have also been known to have secured improvements on the terms of a negotiated settlement. Even 'unsuccessful' strikes in the middle of negotiations have sometimes been held to improve their eventual result. Moreover, wholly unsuccessful strikes may bear fruit later: 'the next time the employer may decide that resistance is not worth the additional expense.'[2] All this vitiates any theoretical conclusion that 'peaceful' negotiation necessarily secures a better result for the workers than could have been achieved with a strike.[3]

The claims of the parties, of course, are a poor guide to their real intentions, and thus to their real achievements. The relation of the original demands of both sides to their eventual concessions may vary between very wide limits; but a single example — that of the 1932 textile strike — may be of interest. The employers began[4] by demanding a wage cut of 3s. 3d. in the £ (16.3 per cent). This the workers rejected. The employers then proposed 2s. 6d. in the £ (12.5 per cent), to which the workers replied by a counter-proposal of 1s. in the £ (5 per cent). The employers then raised their demand somewhat, and the workers then made a 'final offer' of 1s. 3d. in the £ (6.3 per cent). At this point a deadlock was reached; other issues were raised, and the negotiations broke down on these secondary points also.

The strike then broke out, and was punctuated by further negotiations on all points. The difference between the claims of both sides, which had been 1s. 3d. or more at the outbreak of the strike, was slowly reduced to 8d. At this point the workers began to trickle back to work, and the employers stiffened their attitude. A day or two later, however, the difference was reduced to 6d. — employers demanding 2s. in the £ (10 per cent) and workers offering 1s. 6d. (7.5 per cent). The next day agreement was reached on the figure of 1s. 8½d. (8.5 per cent) — 'unfortunately', comments the P.E.P. Report, 'this is an obvious encouragement to the customary Lancashire' (*sic*) 'practice, followed by both sides, of placing original demands much too high'. But the phrase 'too high' begs the whole question. Pitching one's demands 'too high' can only mean pitching

[1] A strike of South Wales quarrymen begun in 1896 lasted almost two years.

[2] LESTER, *Economics of Labor* (New York, 1947), p. 612.

[3] D. CHANG, in *British Methods of Industrial Peace* (1936), pp. 167-8, gave figures for the years 1920-32 showing that the disputes submitted to the Industrial Court were settled in favour of the employers, by compromise, and in favour of the workers respectively in almost exactly the same proportions as were the strikes of those years.

[4] See P.E.P., *Report of the British Cotton Industry* (1934), pp. 84-5.

them too high relative to what one eventually gets: i.e. one's claim is further from the eventual terms of settlement than the demands of the other party. Yet the claim may not be 'too high' relative to what one might have got had one been stronger; and in any case one might have got less had one pitched one's demand lower. The weaker party will often need to pitch its demand higher — even relative to its *expected* gain — than the stronger. In American experience at any rate, 'defensive' strikes sometimes take 'offensive' forms: 'it is significant that even strikes ostensibly for an increase of wages are really for the purpose of preventing a reduction and are undertaken in some cases at least in the hope that through arbitration or compromise a somewhat smaller reduction will be suffered'.[1]

Moreover, the very prospect of a settlement by the concession of one party may induce the other to raise its demands once more. Askwith (*Industrial Problems and Disputes*, p. 82) mentions a particularly exhausting four-month strike in which he was acting as conciliator, where he kept the employers 'in argument and without food for nine hours on end'; 'at last they signed a document even better than what the men had told me they would take; but, foodless as I was, it took me two hours more to persuade those men that they could not possibly get more, when they advanced new points as soon as they saw there was a possibility of a settlement'.

Thus even if figures of original and subsequent demands and concessions were available for wage strikes, they could give very little indication of the 'real' extent of the concessions made. In any case, in many strikes the whole ground of dispute widens and concessions are made in quite other fields which are possibly of great importance for future wage prospects. Thus again, it is impossible to assert that strikes are never advisable.[2]

The propensity to bluff, by the inflation of demands and otherwise, makes it additionally difficult to test any theory by reference to the statistics of strike results. The whole concept of 'victory' in strikes, which is vague in any case, becomes hazier in proportion as demands are inflated. Moreover, the character of strikes has been materially changing; and long strikes are now so much the exception that Hicksian calculations of economic extremity can seldom be held to operate.

(b) *The changed character of strikes*

The rising proportion of short strikes reflects (i) the growing reluctance of the Unions to support strikes, (ii) the growing practice of the employers — supported by the Unions where strikes are unofficial[3] — of refusing to negotiate with men on strike, and possibly also (iii) a shift in the immediate causes of strikes towards

[1] Doten, *Waste in Industry* (1921), p. 305.

[2] Theories of committee decisions, which admit of the possibility of a logical failure to agree when – if all factors were known equally well to both sides – a satisfactory compromise could be reached, have been elaborated by Black and others. Such theories can be extended to cover the time-element in the adjustment of demands. (Cf. articles by D. Black in *Journal of Political Economy* for February 1948 and *Econometrica* for July 1948; also by P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan in *Economica* for February 1934.

[3] Mr. John Hodge, the founder of the Steel Smelters' Union, was called to account — when Minister of Labour in 1917 — by the War Cabinet for his 'drastic' measures in refusing to meet certain Liverpool strikers until they returned to work. He replied by pointing out that this had been the practice in his Union for 26 years. (John Hodge, *Workman's Cottage to Windsor Castle* (1931), p. 172.)

other-than-'basic' issues.[1] Workers often capitulate earlier than if they were driven by economic necessity.[2]

To this extent the threat of a strike might seem to have become less effective, since the risk of economic loss to the employer from a single strike has become so much smaller. According to such a view the strike in general, and not merely the general strike, might become a 'social myth', in Sorel's phrase, which a few more years of experience would serve to explode. But the problem is not so simple as this.

Certainly the strike is no longer 'nothing but a struggle of endurance — a "fight on the belly" ,'[3] as it was described in 1921; neither can it be said, in the words of the same writer, that 'nobody need bother about the lightning strike'. On the contrary, while the prospect of immediate economic loss from a strike of this kind may be negligible to the employer, it has been much reduced for the worker also. Hence the readiness of workers to strike 'irresponsibly', for short periods and often. In a lightning strike, calculations based on prospective losses do not operate. Strikes of this kind, in fact, have a different strategical character and may indeed be a more effective weapon for the workers than appears from the statistics. If for the sake of argument a particular group of workers could endure a strike for 14 days but no more, one 14-day strike might have little effect on their employer, who might be able within the period to make arrangements to avoid incurring the full effect of the loss of 14 days' production. But 14 1-day strikes, at unpredictable intervals, would have a considerable aggregate nuisance value because of their dislocating effect, and would hardly tax the workers' endurance at all. A succession of strikes[4] might do more to force concessions than a single longer strike; but all these strikes except the last would be classified as employers' victories — thus statistically exaggerating the weakness of the workers.

A similar distortion is implicit in the fact that strikes interrupting negotiations are automatically classified as 'settled in favour of the employers', even though they may materially influence the negotiations in the workers' favour. In practice of course, the Trade Union attitude to unofficial strikes is often equivocal: it may be one of preaching pacifism to the men but appeasement to the employers. 'At one time', ran an inspired article in the *Oxford Citizen*,[5] a local Labour Party organ,

[1] An analysis of the proportions of strikes of different lengths according as the proportion of strikes on basic issues (wages and hours) is high or low shows that in those years when there was a high proportion of 'basic' strikes there was a slightly lower proportion of short strikes — lasting under a week — than in other years. (For the method employed, cf. Appendix A below.)

[2] 'Well, it was good while it lasted, but we realized we were up against a brick wall. It was made clear to us at last night's meeting that we could never — through an unofficial strike — gain what we were after while we were on strike. But what we could not gain at the front door we shall get at the back.' *News Chronicle* report of opinion of Bristol bus striker (September 3rd, 1947).

[3] Rose, *Stop the Strike, A Plea for Industrial Peace* (1921).

[4] The fact that coal miners in particular have been liable to strike more than once in the same year suggests a tendency to strike 'in series' rather than 'in parallel'. M. Slater (*Stay-Down Miner* (1936), p. 4) relates how he asked a Welsh miner's wife how many strikes they had been through: 'My question seemed ingenuous and she laughed at it. "I can't count them for you," she said.' While such successions of strikes are probably rarer in other industries, their significance should not be overlooked. The 'Sundays only' railway strikes of 1949 are analogous.

[5] January 1948.

'the men's patience was being sorely tried over the rate of pay. Things began to look black, and ominous talk of a stoppage spread over the assembly floor. Hard work by the branch officers and shop stewards of the T. & G.W.U. and a ready response to their leadership by the men, however, averted this ... They [the branch officers] most solemnly warn the works managers ... that the men are in no mood for procrastination or dissembling tactics ... The Pressed Steel branch of the T. & G.W.U. does not threaten, but it cannot accept, in these circumstances, liability for any unconstitutional action which goaded men may take.'

Similarly, in 1947 the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions intimated to a Court of Inquiry[1] that it had to reckon with the men's determination to win the Confederation's claim: 'if the men took it into their own hands and failed to appear for work on Saturdays, this would be a most undesirable development ...' Trade Union officials use this argument not infrequently; they are by no means incapable of enjoying the best of both worlds. Moreover, requests are sometimes made retrospectively for strike pay on the grounds that the Union has in fact benefited from an unauthorized strike.[2]

The recent change in the character of strikes can be illustrated by a literary contrast. Contemporary emphasis is no longer laid on the sufferings of the workers at the hands of hard-faced employers (as in Galsworthy's *Strife*); it is laid rather on the sufferings of employers at the hands of hard-boiled Trade Union officials (as in St. John Ervine's *Private Enterprise*), or on the sufferings of the community at large owing to 'these little tuppeny ha'penny strikes all over the place eating away the little extra that miners in all parts of the country have worked so hard to produce' (as in Islwyn Williams's broadcast play *Lightning Strike*). One may make full allowance for the different sympathies of the writers, and still appreciate how much strikes have changed. Thus — to oversimplify — even if in the past the length of strikes has determined their results to some extent because workers starved sooner than employers, it is likely to do so no longer because workers do not starve at all.

Thus existing theories (as well as the methods used hitherto to measure the results of strikes) are to some extent out-dated. In so far as strikes are now more like demonstrations than wars, their effectiveness is more difficult to assess. It is even harder to gauge the success of demonstrations as against other pressure-techniques than it was to count up the net gains from wars when these were the sole means of settling quarrels.

APPENDIX A

Results of strikes in relation to their length, size and frequency (see pp. 247-8 above)

The following method was used. To remove the effect of long-term trend in the rising proportion of employers' victories, centred five-year moving totals of

[1] *Report of Court of Inquiry* (*Cmd.* 7036), 1947.

[2] For example, a letter addressed to a T. & G.W.U. Area Secretary by the Hanwell Tram Branch in 1934, appealed for a full day's pay for all who struck on May 9th, one of the reasons being that 'the strike has strengthened the bargaining power of the Union immeasurably'. (Quoted in *Busman's Punch* (June 1934).) The subsequent legitimization of strikes is provided for in some cases (e.g. by the appeal system of the A.E.U.).

(i) the number of strikes won by employers, and (ii) the total number of strikes, were used to construct a five-year moving percentage of employers' victories.[1] Where the actual percentage of employers' victories for a given year came above the corresponding five-year moving percentage, the year was classified as a year of 'high' employers' victories; where it came below, the year was classified as a year of 'low' employers' victories. Thus the years 1911 to 1938[2] were able to be divided into two groups, characterized by high and low proportions of employers' victories respectively. (It should be stressed that the terms 'high' and 'low' are used in relation to the experience of *the current five years only*.) The distribution of strikes of different lengths and sizes was calculated for each set of years. The same procedure was adopted in respect of strikes settled by compromise and strikes won by workers.

(a) *Length*

Proportions of strikes of different lengths, according to results obtained, 1911-38

	Percentage of strikes lasting —							
	less than 1 *week*	1 *and less than* 2 *weeks*	2 *and less than* 4 *weeks*	4 *and less than* 6 *weeks*	6 *and less than* 10 *weeks*	10 *and less than* 20 *weeks*	20 *weeks and over*	*Total*
(*a*) Years when percentage of *employers' victories* was relatively—								
high	51.6	18.8	12.3	5.5	5.6	4.5	1.7	100.0
low	52.7	18.8	12.1	5.7	5.3	3.9	1.5	100.0
(*b*) Years when percentage of *compromises* was relatively—								
high	54.5	18.0	11.8	5.4	5.0	3.9	1.4	100.0
low	50.2	19.4	12.6	5.8	5.8	4.4	1.8	100.0
(*c*) Years when percentage of *workers' victories* was relatively—								
high	55.0	18.2	11.8	5.3	4.8	3.5	1.4	100.0
low	50.3	19.2	12.5	5.8	5.9	4.6	1.7	100.0

(Source: 1913 *Report on Strikes and Lockouts* (*Cmd.* 7658); 18th and 22nd *Abstracts of Labour Statistics*; *Ministry of Labour Gazette*.)

One could hardly hope to find a sharply defined 'critical length of strike', since the factors determining a settlement of one kind or another vary so much,

[1] It would perhaps have been of more interest to analyse the *numbers of workers involved* in strikes of different lengths rather than the number of strikes. However, while such figures are given in the *Abstracts of Labour Statistics*, one cannot assume that all the workers alleged to have been involved in strikes of given lengths were out for the whole of the period specified. For example, the *A.L.S.* gives the following details for the year 1930:—

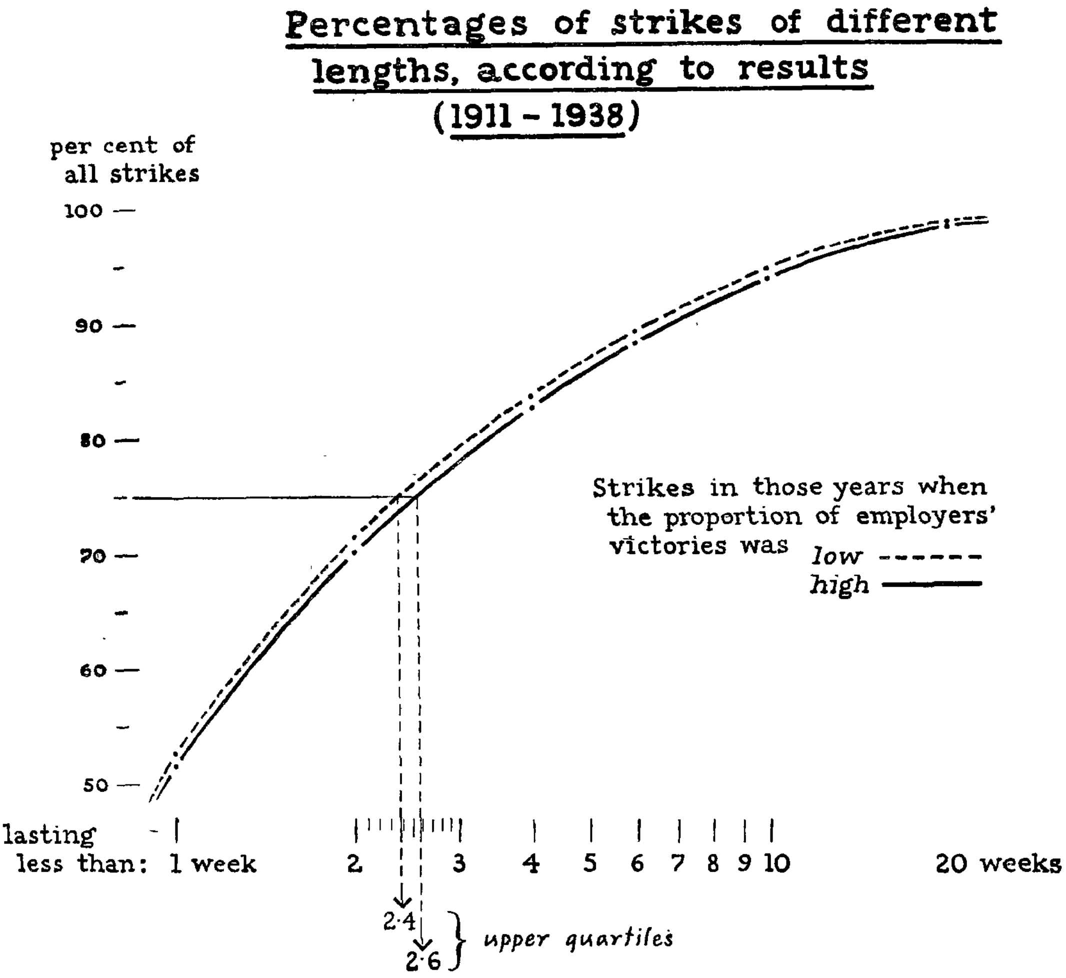
Strikes lasting 20 weeks and upwards:	3
Workers directly and indirectly involved in these strikes:	120,000
Strikes involving 10,000 workers and upwards:	2
Aggregate duration in working days of these strikes:	3,686,000

The *Gazette* lists of Principal Disputes for the year 1930 mention one strike – that of some 90,000 wool workers — which clearly came into both categories. If, however, these 90,000 had in fact all been 'involved' for a period of 20 weeks, as is suggested by the *A.L.S.* tables, this strike alone would have lost some 12,800,000 working days (allowing for weekends and holidays); while all the working days lost in all strikes over the whole year amounted only to 4,453,000. In fact, as the *Gazette* makes clear, of the original 90,000 workers 20,000 returned to work after 3 weeks, and a further 30,000 after 7 weeks — all but 300 of the remaining 40,000 strikers being back at work by the end of 16 weeks. Even though the strike technically 'lasted 20 weeks and upwards', little more than 0.3 per cent of the strikers can possibly have been 'involved' for that length of time.

[2] No breakdown of the number of strikes by duration is given after 1938.

even in the same industry, locality and period.[1] Relatively to the experience of the current 5-year period, however, if strikes dragged on, compromise was less likely and outright victory more likely — victories in long strikes lying rather with employers than with workers. Although the proportion of long strikes was diminishing over the period and the proportion of employers' victories was increasing, employers tended to win strikes which, although absolutely shorter than those which they won in earlier years, were still relatively longer than the strikes won by the workers or compromised.

A rough measure of the variations in the length of strikes with different results may be made by reading off the length of strikes at the upper quartile from graphs of the kind reproduced below. These variations are, in fact, slight.



GRAPH 18

[1] Cf. the description of the brickmakers' strikes cited in the Board of Trade *Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs for* 1892 (*Cd.* 7403), p. 157: 'our neighbour and ourselves were the only firms who gave way to the demands of the workmen, the rest of the manufacturers in this district stopping their works the whole of the season. Our neighbour gave in at once, as he holds his brickfield under a lease, and is obliged to pay a royalty on a minimum quantity, whether made or not. We did not consider that the prices realized for bricks justified the men in asking for an advance, but we felt compelled to give in, in order to protect ourselves against our neighbour, who would not only be making an extra price by the stoppage of our works, but would be taking our customers'.

We may tabulate these estimates as follows:—

When the percentage of	*Three-quarters of all strikes were strikes lasting not more than*:
employers' victories was high:	2.6 weeks
,, ,, ,, low:	2.4 ,,
compromises was high:	2.3 ,,
,, ,, low:	2.6 ,,
workers' victories was high:	2.2 ,,
,, ,, ,, low:	2.6 ,,

(b) *Size*

Proportions of strikes of different sizes, according to results obtained, 1911-38

Percentage of strikes directly and indirectly involving —

	less than 100 *workers*	100 *and under* 250	250 *and under* 500	500 *and under* 1000	1000 *and under* 5000	5000 *and over*	*Total*
(*a*) Years when percentage of *employers' victories* was relatively —							
high	50.0	19.5	12.7	9.4	7.2	1.2	100.0
low	46.5	20.1	12.9	9.8	8.9	1.8	100.0
(*b*) Years when percentage of *compromises* was relatively —							
high	46.5	20.1	13.4	9.9	8.5	1.6	100.0
low	49.4	19.7	12.2	9.4	7.8	1.5	100.0
(*c*) Years when percentage of *workers' victories* was relatively —							
high	45.6	20.5	13.4	10.2	8.8	1.5	100.0
low	49.6	19.4	12.4	9.3	7.7	1.6	100.0

There is of course a trend towards a higher proportion of small strikes as well as towards a higher proportion of employers' victories; but here the 'trend-free' results given above do not contradict one's first impression — namely that employers tended to win strikes when they were small rather than when they were big. The two trends may, as has been suggested, be connected: employers may have been helped to win strikes in so far as the Unions were reluctant to sponsor widespread action. A measure of the variations in the size of strikes with different results may be obtained by the same method as that used above:

When the percentage of —	*Three-quarters of all strikes were strikes involving not more than —*
employers' victories was high:	330 workers
,, ,, ,, low:	390 ,,
compromises was high:	380 ,,
,, ,, low:	340 ,,
workers' victories was high:	390 ,,
,, ,, ,, low:	340 ,,

(c) *Frequency*

If the yearly average number of strikes is taken for the same sets of years, it appears that when a high proportion of strikes were won by the employers, there were on the whole fewer strikes than in other years.

When the percentage of—	*The average yearly number of strikes was—*
employers' victories was high:	703
,, ,, ,, low:	742
compromises was high:	734
,, ,, low:	715
workers' victories was high:	737
,, ,, ,, low:	715

APPENDIX B

Further analysis

Length of strike, unemployment, and results of strikes

Year	*Percentage of strikes lasting less than one week*	*Unemployment percentage*	*Percentage of employers' victories*	*Percentage of compromises*	*Percentage of workers' victories*
1921	38.3	17.0	41.3	38.8	19.9
1922	43.0	14.3	38.5	42.2	19.3
1923	53.3	11.7	29.1	41.1	29.8
1924	49.7	10.3	33.1	43.9	23.0
1925	51.2	11.3	31.4	43.1	25.5
1926	54.2	12.5	39.1	40.1	20.8
1927	51.6	9.7	38.3	41.9	19.8
1928	51.7	10.8	47.7	38.4	13.9
1929	63.5	10.4	38.1	41.3	20.6
1930	60.2	16.1	36.8	46.4	16.8
1931	60.7	21.3	39.5	34.8	25.7
1932	57.6	22.1	43.2	34.2	22.6
1933	65.8	19.9	41.4	37.6	21.0
1934	65.2	16.7	39.5	31.6	28.9
1935	65.8	15.5	38.5	34.6	26.9
1936	69.8	13.1	42.7	30.8	26.5
1937	72.4	10.8	48.4	29.3	22.3
1938	70.6	12.9	49.7	27.1	23.2

A partial regression analysis, undertaken to determine the effect of (i) the percentage of short strikes, after correction for linear trend, and (ii) the unemployment percentage, on the proportions of employers' victories, compromises and workers' victories respectively, reveals nothing of significance beyond the association of a high proportion of employers' victories with a low proportion of short strikes.

In the following regression equations, E, C and W represent the percentages of strikes settled in favour of the employers, by compromise, and in favour of the workers respectively; U is the unemployment percentage, and L is the (trend-corrected) percentage of strikes lasting less than one week:

$$E = +89.54 - 0.04U - 0.83L$$
$$C = +24.50 - 0.25U + 0.28L$$
$$W = -13.63 + 0.29U + 0.54L$$

With the exception of the coefficient of the regression of the proportion of employers' victories on the proportion of short strikes (—0.83), none of the coefficients is significant by ordinary tests of significance (which assume that successive values are independent of each other).

APPENDIX C

Other factors relevant to strike results

Certain other factors, relating to which statistics are available, may bear on the results of strikes. Such are (*a*) their causes; (*b*) the methods by which they are settled; and (*c*) their industrial distribution.

Causes

In so far as the causes of strikes — notably those of strikes about wages — are conditioned by the trade cycle, they throw little additional light on strike results. The following limited[1] breakdown of strike results by causes is, however, of interest, despite the fact that the period covered is one of low militancy.

Percentage of workers directly involved in strikes arising from various causes, 1927-39

Results	*Causes*								
	Basic				*Frictional*		*Solidarity*		
	wage inc.	*wage dec.*	*other wage*	*hrs.*	*empl.*	*other wk. arr.*	*T.U.*	*symp.*	*(misc.)*
In favour of employers:	45.7	28.3	47.6	77.9	42.9	34.5	19.5	56.3	75.6
	(39.7)				(39.1)		(41.9)		
Compromised:	44.5	69.4	34.1	10.7	32.3	18.1	14.4	16.5	19.9
	(53.2)				(25.8)		(15.7)		
In favour of workers:	9.8	2.3	18.3	11.4	24.8	47.4	66.1	27.2	4.5
	(7.1)				(35.1)		(42.4)		
All results:	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(100.0)				(100.0)		(100.0)		

Some features are probably characteristic of all periods. Compromise is more likely on wage questions than on others, since there is often a wide quantitative divergence between claims. It may further be noted that there is more compromise in 'defensive' wage strikes (where compromises are 'concealed employers' victories') than in 'aggressive' wage strikes (where compromises are 'concealed workers' victories'); to this extent 'concealed' victories follow outright victories.

The relative failure to compromise on questions of hours of work is probably explained by the fact that disputes about working hours are often concerned with a short specific period where it is not practicable to split the difference.

The general decline in the proportion of strikes compromised over the period as a whole, which has been noted above, is no doubt partly due to the shift in the incidence of strike causes away from wages questions — i.e. away from those questions on which compromise is most feasible.

[1] The fact that the figures relate to workers involved and not to the number of strikes means, of course, that they are heavily weighted by a few big strikes. (The data for 1925 and 1926 were neglected as dubious.)

Methods of settlement

Possibly some relation may exist between the methods of settlement of strikes and their results, although the proportion of strikes settled in various ways did not change materially as between the two interwar decades. The figures of workers involved, however, do show some movement away from direct negotiation — and from arbitration — towards conciliation as a method of settling big strikes. Figures of methods of settlement of strikes (summarized in the main statistical appendix) are, however, not very informative, partly perhaps because the distinction between different methods is sometimes blurred in practice.

Industrial distribution

The results of strikes will have been affected by their industrial distribution to the extent that industries differed systematically in respect of the determinants of strike results which have been mentioned. But since the influence of these factors cannot be measured for single industries, it must suffice to present summary tables (similar to those on pp. 237-8) in order to illustrate the industrial incidence of strikes having different results.

Percentage of workers directly involved in strikes having particular results, by industries, 1927-36

	In favour of employers	*Compromised*	*In favour of workers*
Mining, etc.:	39.1	37.3	23.6
Textiles:	27.1	57.6	15.3
Metal, etc.:	30.8	54.4	14.8
Transport:	49.4	32.6	18.0
Building:	30.1	43.3	26.6
Clothing:	40.7	39.8	19.5
Other industries:	25.1	58.6	16.3
All industries:	33.6	47.1	19.3

The relative propensity, during the period, of strikers in one industry to be involved in strikes having a particular result may be expressed as a ratio between the percentage of strikers in the industry in question who were involved in strikes having this result (see table above) and the percentage of strikers in *all other industries* who were so involved. The ratios are as follows: —

Ratios illustrating relative propensity to be involved in strikes settled —

	In favour of employers	*By compromise*	*In favour of workers*
Mining, etc.:	1.32	0.69	1.47
Textiles:	0.71	1.45	0.70
Metal, etc.:	0.91	1.16	0.76
Transport:	1.51	0.68	0.93
Building:	0.89	0.92	1.39
Clothing:	1.21	0.85	1.01
Other industries:	0.74	1.25	0.84

If this last table is read with the corresponding table given for causes (p. 238), the following picture emerges: —

	Chief relative cause of strikes:*	*Chief relative* result of strikes:*
Mining, etc.:	solidarity	workers won
Textiles:	basic	compromise
Metal, etc.:	frictional	compromise
Transport:	frictional	employers won
Building:	basic	workers won
Clothing:	solidarity	employers won
Other industries:	basic	compromise

* relative to the experience of strikers in the remaining industries.

* * *

Section 2: Economic effects

After discussing the short-term results of strikes, we must inquire into their wider effects, economic, social and political. In considering first of all their economic effects, we may distinguish (*a*) the effects on those directly concerned and (*b*) the effects on the economy in general, both through pressure on wages and through the actual check on production. Although no precise balance-sheet can be drawn up, the direct effect of strikes in pushing up wages or arresting their fall does not seem to have been very great, and the direct loss to production has usually been very small by any criterion; although a few very big strikes have caused exceptional losses, the losses have usually been made up very quickly. The effect of the loss due to strikes, however, depends on the country's general economic position, and it is natural that since the second world war even small strikes have had big effects.

Effects on those directly concerned

To weigh up the gains and losses of a strike is like weighing up the gains and losses of any other kind of warfare. On the employer's side the immediate losses are idle capital, loss of profits, the delaying of orders and loss of 'goodwill', as well as the possible incurring of insurance or strike-breaking expenses;[1] while on the worker's side there is the loss of wages (never compensated for, even if the strike has full Trade Union support, by dispute benefit — which in any case comes from the worker's pocket—and still less otherwise),[2] the contracting of debts, and all the personal hardships that may be involved. 'Up to the end of September', wrote the historian of the South Wales coal strikes of 1910-11,[3] 'the strike had meant a loss in wages to the Cambrian Combine work-

[1] Some information relating to employers' losses through strikes was given in the early *Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs* of the Board of Trade, although this was not of very great value. Insurance and strike-breaking expenses are discussed in Appendix B to the present section.

[2] Poor Relief cannot legally be paid to strikers themselves (see p. 139), although in most big strikes it has been paid to their families. Sometimes relief in kind is also provided: in the 1948 dockers' strike, for example, £939 14s. 6d., was paid to strikers' families from the local rates, in addition to relief in kind to the value of £82 2s. 0d. Special levies and subscriptions may also be organized.

[3] Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield*, 1910-11 (1911), pp. 193, 204-6. Raynes (*Coal and its Conflicts* (1928), p. 117) makes the point, not unfamiliar in accounts of strikes, that 'one-third of the cost of that strike would have bought out the Cambrian Combine for the Miners' Federation'.

men of nearly £800,000;[1] while on the assumption that debts were accumulated at the rate of 4/6 per week per person in receipt of strike pay the total indebtedness incurred exceeded £90,000.' By the end of the strikes the S.W.M.F. was financially crippled and their negotiating power with the coalowners weakened 'almost to the point of nullity':[2] 'how different the consequences of the strikes to the South Wales Coalowners' Association! . . . On the whole the strikes yielded the average coalowner during the period covered by them a better price than he would otherwise have obtained for his free coal; and . . . the Coalowners' Association emerged from the struggle at least as strong financially as it was when the stoppages began in September 1910.'

The possible gains from strikes need no emphasis, since these are their inspiration. Those whom Kalecki[3] has designated as 'workers' friends' have often maintained, of course, that the gains never outweigh the losses: 'the strike weapon . . . penalizes every one of the workers more than the employer at whom it is aimed'.[4] It is true that lost profits are commonly made up more quickly than, and sometimes at the expense of, wages; but since improvements have been won by strikes after all other means have failed, 'it is probably futile . . . to attempt to convince workingmen by the citation of statistics that striking is inexpedient'.[5] Moreover, although it has been doubted whether the gains made by the workers in one industry ever balance the losses caused to workers in other industries by a long strike in a vital service,[6] this rarely seems relevant, even supposing it true. The more or less sectional and temporary character of workers' 'gains' has not been confined to gains won by striking.

Not that it is necessary to win a strike in order to gain from it, even in the short term. Employers have certainly sometimes held the view that strikes are the best thing which could happen in certain circumstances;[7] for example, a stoppage may make it possible to clear out accumulated stocks, or may lead to more work later on. On the workers' side a stubborn strike, even if it is lost, may discourage employers from pressing home their advantage — or it may result in an inquiry and Government action. Moreover some strikes are undertaken with the idea of forcing employers to deplete their stocks and thus strengthening the workers' bargaining power in future negotiations.[8]

The longer-term effects of a strike, of course, depend even less on its immediate result.

[1] For other estimates of lost wages, see ASKWITH, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 192n. In China between the world wars, the request for the payment of whatever wages might be lost during the strikes seems to have been a regular demand of strikers. (WEI LIN, *Chinese Labour Disputes since* 1919 (Nanking, 1932), *passim*).

[2] An extreme case of a Union wearing itself down by repeated strikes was that of the Western Federation of Miners in the United States early in the present century. The W.F.M. was at first the leading organization of the Industrial Workers of the World.

[3] *Economic Fluctuations* (1939), p. 91.

[4] Mr. Edwards, M.P., at a Trades Council, Labour Party and Co-operative Party Conference at Eastbourne in April 1947. (*Manchester Guardian* (April 21st, 1947).)

[5] DOTEN, *Waste in Industry* (1921), p. 311.

[6] See RAMSAY MUIR, *Trade Unions and the Trade Union Bill* (1927), p. 47.

[7] See *Labour Management*, No. XXVI (April-May 1939), p. 273. ASKWITH (*Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 461) noted that, after the 1918 Armistice, some textile employers 'may have thought a stoppage might steady the market'.

[8] Early examples of such strikes (in 1824-25) are quoted by ASPINALL, *The Early English Trade Unions* (1949), p. xxix; and the same motive was ascribed to the U.S.A. miners' strike of the spring of 1949. (Cf. also WEBB, *Industrial Democracy* (1920 edn.), pp. 447-8.)

Effects on the economy in general

Apart from their effects on the particular workers and employers concerned, strikes may have an appreciable effect upon the economy in general. It is, however, hard to assess this effect, (*a*) because of the absence or unreliability of quantitative data, (*b*) because the economic effects of strikes depend partly on their general economic context, of which there is no adequate measure, and (*c*) because of the tendency to special pleading. Almost all stoppages appear, irrespective of their origins, as wilfully aggressive acts of the workers; they often cause inconvenience or loss of prestige; they may reveal disturbing political aspirations; and these irrelevant considerations are apt to colour people's judgments of their economic effects.

In the opinion of one American author,[1] for example, strikes were the prime cause of high prices after the first world war: 'the reason why each brick cost four times as much to buy and then four times as much to lay was at least 75 per cent because of the spirit of strikes, the threat of strikes, and strikes themselves'; 'of the 3232 major strikes during 1919 there was probably not one that did not throw out of employment or otherwise reduce the wages of from two times to seven hundred times as many other workers as the strike itself directly involved'. It is true that the threat of strikes may, on occasion, put a heavier burden on industry than that imposed by actual strike losses.[2] But as far as actual strikes go, while in the past their fluctuations have shown some correspondence with the movements of prices, wages, or employment, they have usually been rather a barometric symptom than a contributory cause of those movements. Even in those few exceptional years when strikes have had a marked reciprocal influence because of their effect on production, this has been quickly offset. Pigou, for example, pointed out that the wider effects of strikes are generally short-lived, and 'on the whole body of evidence . . . it seems reasonable to conclude that, in recent times at all events, industrial disputes have not played any significant part in causing industrial fluctuations'.[3]

Even the short-term effects of strikes have been more or less negligible since 1926.[4] Moreover, it might be argued that, since a growing proportion of strikes has been settled outright in the employers' favour, and the proportion even of compromise solutions has declined, the effect of strikes in disturbing the economic *status quo* — or *cursus quo* — has been diminishing on this account also. And finally, if the effect of strikes on wages is considered, not only has the year-to-year effect of strikes on wages probably been smaller than is generally assumed, but wage strikes have formed a progressively less important proportion of all strikes.

[1] Marshall Olds, *The High Cost of Strikes* (1921), pp. xvi, 26, 42.

[2] Cf. *Committee on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations* (1926), p. 40.

[3] *Industrial Fluctuations* (1929), pp. 51-2. The period considered was from 1894 to 1913, which included the big pre-war strike movement. The influence of the exceptionally big post-war strikes from 1919 to 1926 was discussed by Clay, *The Post-War Unemployment Problem* (1929), pp. 37-8; he considered that the 'true trend of employment' was apparent by 1928, i.e. before the peak of the boom.

[4] The vast majority of strikes, of course, affect single firms. (Of those 'Principal Disputes' involving 1000 workers or more, in respect of which information was given, over 90 per cent involved the workers of one firm only (1933-39). Considering that these strikes include many of the biggest and none of the smallest, the general proportion is higher still.)

Yet while no one would pretend that past strikes have contributed much to present economic difficulties, future strikes are another matter: 'I cannot imagine', said a speaker in 1947,[1] 'a worse time in the history of the country for strike action, or a policy in which we are more certain to forfeit any public support we have for our claim than at this moment.' In the unprecedented situation left by the war, the exhaustion of key stocks and the worsened terms of trade have meant persistent shortages and therefore near-inflationary conditions which are so unstable that any loss to production, however small, and any additional pressure coming from uncontrolled wage-increases, has been dreaded.

It is therefore worth considering what indications there are of the effect of strikes on wages and output.

General influence of strikes on wages

Strike pressure should, of course, be distinguished from other forms of pressure on wages — for example, political pressure in wartime. Although generalizations are precarious, the immediate effect of strikes on wages does not seem to have been large during the period for which we have evidence.

Between 1927 and 1939, the workers who struck for wage increases numbered only some 305,000, or about 9.4 per cent of all strikers. About 30,000 of these won their demands outright, and another 136,000 of them won a proportion of them by compromise. Yet the increase in wages which might be considered as directly 'won' by striking amounted over these thirteen years to less than 0.6 per cent of the wage increases that came about by other means.

Year	(A) *Gross weekly increase in wage rates* (£)	(B) *Part of (A) which was won by striking ('preceded by disputes')* (£)	(C) *(B) as percentage of (A)*	(D) *Percentage of workers striking for wage increases who were wholly or partially* successful*
1927	125,100	220	0.2	63.1
1928	41,000	500	1.2	64.5
1929	48,400	300	0.6	77.3
1930	92,400	185	0.2	87.8
1931	16,400	50	0.3	63.1
1932	11,900	20	0.2	31.8
1933	40,000	400	1.0	50.0
1934	111,700	420	0.4	62.6
1935	213,100	1,410	0.6	89.5
1936	512,250	3,250	0.6	51.9
1937	909,500	11,425	1.2	51.0
1938	388,000	500	0.1	56.5
1939	1,062,650	1,050	0.1	35.9

* i.e. by compromises.

Not only do gains by strikes represent a very small proportion of wage increases generally, but column (D) does not seem to show any relation between successful striking and these increases. The relation between strikes and wage increases is in fact far more complex and indirect.[2]

[1] Mr. J. E. Herbecq, who was opposing (unsuccessfully) a resolution passed at the C.S.C.A. Conference in favour of the adoption of a strike policy. (*Oxford Mail* (May 21st, 1937).)

[2] See pp. 232-3.

During this period, wage reductions heavily outbalanced wage increases. Some 1,120,000 workers (35 per cent of all strikers) resisted wage reductions by striking, but these reductions represented only 7.8 per cent of the total sum of wage reductions, and little more than 2 per cent of the strikers were wholly successful in resisting them.

Admittedly it would be ridiculous to conclude, on this evidence, that major wage changes had never been secured by strikes, or even that the speed and comprehensiveness of the development of wage-fixing machinery owed nothing to past strike action on many issues (in particular for the right to organize). Obviously things would be very different if Trade Unions did not exist, if they explicitly forswore the strike, and even if the possibility of the strike were less implicit in negotiation. Nevertheless, the strikes that actually happened seem to have had little direct effect on wages.

One should not belittle, of course, the efforts of the Trade Unions, any more than those of Alice and the Red Queen, in keeping themselves in the same place. The 1948 P.E.P. *Report*, commenting on the apparent stability of the share of wages in the national income in a period (1924-41) 'when the balance of strength has been somewhat tilted in favour of the employers', noted that 'continuous pressure from the trade unions for the maintenance of wage levels in both money and real terms prevented the balance from being unduly tipped against them'.[1]

Ever since the Mond-Turner Conferences, however, the Unions have tended to assert that industrial conflicts were neither fundamental nor insoluble, and have progressively discouraged strikes; nor are wages, so much as in the past, the immediate object of their strategy. Moreover, even unofficial strike leaders 'have been moderate in their demands'.[2] As Mr. George Brown, M.P., wrote in 1947,[3] it is when one looks at the small limits within which hundreds of wage rates are encompassed that one appreciates '(1) how patriotic have been the negotiating machinery and the Trade Unions in avoiding a real inflationary spiral; and (2) how much the workers have been willing to trust and acquiesce in the bargains made by, and the advice of, their Unions'.

Effect of strikes on output

> 'Let us pray that the industrial workers of Britain may cease to bring hardship and loss upon their fellow countrymen by strikes, absenteeism and idleness.'
>
> From form of prayer proposed by Bishop of Rochester, quoted in *Reynolds News* (February 9th, 1947).
>
> 'Strikes are a form of rest and consequently beneficial to production.'
>
> Opinion of Ministry of Labour official, quoted in *People in Production* (1942), p. 247.

It would seem to be a truism that strikes, 'like wars between nations, have always ultimately a negative effect and involve a net loss',[4] since production is after all interrupted and the consumable output is diminished, for a time at least:

[1] *British Trade Unions* (1948), pp. 73, 82.
[2] Cole, introduction to Barou, *British Trade Unions* (1947), p. vi.
[3] In *Picture Post* (June 21st, 1947) (arguing against a general wages policy).
[4] *Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes* (I.L.O., 1926), p. 11.

in the terser proverb of the sheep farmer, 'every baa misses a bite'. Guesses at the output lost by strikes are commonly made on the basis of a count of working days lost — which is not unlike estimating air-raid damage by reference to the bomb-tonnage dropped, irrespective of target or type of bomb. Obviously the figure of working days lost cannot but be inaccurate, incomplete and ambiguous, and cannot give anything but a very general indication of even the immediate effects of strikes on output.

The figure is inaccurate because of the difficulties of enumeration; it is strictly speaking 'not possible to estimate accurately even the simplest and most objective elements of strike costs — namely, the man-days or wages lost'.[1]

It is incomplete firstly because very small and very short strikes are excluded from the statistics altogether. Secondly, the effect of ca' canny, which may precede or follow strikes, is not measured. Thirdly, no account is taken of the repercussions of strikes on employment in other industries or even factories; nor, on the other hand, can appropriate deductions be made for working days which would have been lost in any case through sickness, absenteeism, unemployment[2] and so on — still less for the important self-compensating effects by which the immediate losses from even the biggest strikes may be made up.

It is ambiguous if only because, for instance, a figure of 600 working days lost might refer to a strike of 600 men for one day, a strike of 100 men for six days, six one-day strikes of 100 men apiece, and so on; and the effects of these will not be identical even if they happen in the same factory, still less if they happen in different factories or in different branches of industry, or are subject to the infinitude of other circumstantial differences of industrial life. Quite small strikes of key workers in, say, telephones, or in the processing or delivery of perishable goods, may obviously inflict an immediate loss upon output disproportionate to the loss of working days; and it is even more obvious that the immediate effects on other industries of a coal strike of any size in Britain since the second world war may be greater than say in 1939, when work could not be found for some 13 per cent of the workers in the industry.

Many of the differences in economic context which give meaning to the figures of days lost in strikes cannot be measured at all. The industrial incidence of days lost has, indeed, been indicated,[3] although no occupational breakdown is possible. Their *regional* incidence can be measured only uncertainly. Naturally the regional incidence of strikes will have little significance in the present connexion in so far as industries are homogeneous, since it will tend to reflect the regional concentration of industries. In the mining industry, however, there are wide regional differences both in respect of the character and destination of the product and also in respect of productivity, so that the effect of mining strikes

[1] GAGLIARDO, *Strikes in a Democracy*, *American Economic Review* (March 1941), p. 47.

[2] DOTEN (*Waste in Industry* (1921), p. 309) stresses the point that — especially in seasonal and irregular industries — 'the time lost in strikes is really taken out of the time that employees would have been idle in any case rather than out of production time.' Indeed, several writers remark that U.S.A. coal output has been higher than usual in the years of some of the greatest coal strikes. An analogous point is made by MCLEAN (*The Morality of the Strike* (1921), pp. 80-1): 'during the five months of the' (U.S.A.) 'anthracite strike eight men were killed, three or four of these deaths being caused by men on strike or claiming to be in sympathy with the union; while if the mines had been operated during this period and had maintained the average number of accidents, two hundred men would have been killed and six hundred seriously maimed or injured.'

[3] See p. 162.

will certainly be qualified by their regional distribution. The limited data[1] seem to show that, as between the two war periods, not only have mining strikes been, absolutely, more severe in the second war than in the first, but that they have also been heavier where productivity has been higher or rising relatively quickly over the inter-war years (e.g. in Yorkshire and some parts of Scotland rather than South Wales). To this extent they will have been somewhat more damaging than a mere comparison of working days lost would show, even though the loss never assumed critical proportions. (It would also be of interest to discover, for example, what difference the relative degree of mechanization in the different regions made to the dislocation caused by strikes; but since the occupations of the strikers are not known, analysis reveals little.)

It is of course the *general* economic context of strikes which should weight figures of days lost most significantly; and this cannot be measured at all. The effect of strikes may sometimes be disproportionately severe because even though the output directly lost is small, the 'multiplier' effect of the loss may be very big in a context of shortages and low stocks, and because labour, in so far as it is fully employed, is in a stronger bargaining position and may use this in order to secure a succession of wage increases all over industry which will aggravate inflationary trends. These considerations are especially cogent in wartime, when owing to the need for rapid changes in organization and technique shortages are constantly appearing, and when critical shortages may mean military collapse. Strikes at such times, moreover, impair national unity and hence the 'national effort' in general. War conditions, however, are only one case of 'full' employment; even since the recent war, low stocks and 'undermanning' in vital industries have continued to emphasize the economic dangers of strikes disproportionately to the days lost by them.

One illustrative instance may be taken. The 'fuel crisis' of the winter of 1946-47 — i.e. the aggravation of the existing coal shortage by a transport hold-up — was analogous in its shock effect to a national coal strike of 1 to 1½ days, in so far as 895,000 tons of coal[2] were reckoned as lost in a fairly short space of time. But whereas previously such losses were generally made good, the loss was then virtually a dead loss since it could not be fully made up despite the best efforts of miners and transport workers — and was therefore passed on to the rest of industry. Small variations in coal output, even if apparently negligible against total requirements, were disproportionately important because — under the system of priority for domestic consumers and public utilities — industry was the residual consumer of coal.

[1] Changes in regional productivity over the inter-war years can be judged from a comparison of figures given in the *Coal Industry Commission Report of* 1919 (*Cmd.* 361), vol. III, pp. 14-16, and in *Ministry of Fuel and Power Statistical Digest from* 1938 (*Cmd.* 6538), pp. 13-14. Very rough figures of days lost by regions may be deduced from information given in the lists of Principal Disputes.

[2] Of which 215,000 tons loss was ascribed to 'transport difficulties' proper (e.g. the lack of empty wagons), apart from the results of the sealing-off of mines by snow (miners unable to get to work and coal unable to be cleared). The general shut-down of traffic caused (*a*) delays in deliveries of coal — the effects of which could generally speaking be made up since industry was in any case working short-time, and (*b*) an absolute loss of coal due to the impossibility of further mining until existing supplies had been cleared from the pits. A stubborn nation-wide transport strike would of course theoretically have a similar effect, but the interdiction of the weather was more effective than any transport strike is likely to be.

In this case the overall effect was estimated at a dead loss of some 2 per cent of the production of the manufacturing and building industries, and therefore of commodity distribution.[1] Over the 'crisis' unemployment jumped from 410,000 (average November 1946 to January 1947) to a peak of 2,417,000:[2] a much bigger leap than occurred, for instance, during the 3-month national coal strike of 1921 and the 7-month coal strike of 1926.[3] Although this figure may be considered artificially swollen since industry was already working short time and was likely to do so increasingly in any case, so that to this extent the figure represents a change in structure rather than in volume of unemployment, and although the industrial shut-down was ordered, obviously, before stocks were literally down to zero, the fuel 'crisis' certainly provided an object lesson on the narrow safety-margins of sudden stoppages in bottleneck industries.

It nevertheless remains true that over a fairly wide margin time lost may have no connexion with output lost, whatever the economic context. 'It cannot be expected', ran the findings of the 40-Hour Week Committee set up by the T.U.C. in 1944,[4] 'that the T.U.C. should abandon the pursuit of the 40-hour week because of the fact that the immediate industrial and economic situation of the country calls for increased and sustained production. We do not admit that an early reduction in working hours should necessarily lead to any loss of output. Indeed, we anticipate a quite contrary effect in most industries and services.' Even their severest critics would hardly have accused the originators of the miners' 5-day week (which involved a yearly 'loss' of at least 15,000,000 working days) of intending to cause an annual loss of coal far in excess of that due to all strikes throughout the second world war; it would be as reasonable to have complimented the mining strikers on striving to increase production by a timely shortening of working hours.

Nevertheless, the figure of working days lost remains the only direct quantitative evidence available of the effect of strikes; and even though it cannot be used with partisan assurance, it 'can well be defended as an interesting index of the economic importance of the dispute'.[5]

'Normal' loss of working time through strikes

(a) *Relative to total working time*

'Si on répartissait les grèves sur l'ensemble des salariés, chaque salarié perdrait environ une journée de travail sur cinq cents, c'est-à-dire une journée de travail tous les deux ans; "c'est un chômage deux fois moins intense que celui qu'impose à la France la fête annuelle du 14 juillet".'[6] British experience has been similar. 'Strikes and lock-outs', wrote the Webbs in 1902,[7] 'account for much less loss of working time in the year than our laudable custom of

[1] *London and Cambridge Economic Service Bulletin* II, vol. XXV (May 12th, 1947). The loss of income was variously estimated.

[2] *Monthly Digest of Statistics* (May 1947), table 25 (including 503,200 workers stood off but not registered, while excluding workers out of work but retained by their firms).

[3] In 1921 unemployment jumped from 1,390,000 (average for 3 months preceding strike) to 2,580,000; in 1926 from 1,171,000 (average for 3 months preceding strike) to a peak of 1,751,000.

[4] Quoted in *Labour* (April 1946), p. 230.

[5] *Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes* (I.L.O. 1926), p. 40.

[6] Escoffier, *Les Grèves et l'Arbitrage* (Douai, 1904), p. 16.

[7] *History of Trade Unionism*, p. xv.

treating Good Friday and Christmas Day as Sundays'; 'the substitution of a national holiday for an ordinary working day inflicts a larger loss upon output than all industrial disputes of a year taken together', echoed the I.L.O. later.[1] In the inter-war period 1922 to 1936 (but not including the 'abnormal' year 1926, which defied calculation) strikes, even in the coal industry, caused a loss of actual production time of little more than 0.5 per cent.[2] In 1944 it was estimated that strikes in industry as a whole were losing production time to the extent only of 0.2 per cent,[3] while the loss due to strikes in the transition year 1945 was put by *The Times* at 'considerably less than 0.1 per cent of the total working days'.[4] Though precision is impossible, it is clear that the general order of magnitude of the proportionate loss of working time through strikes is normally very small indeed.

If the days lost are considered in relation to the number of workers employed, the picture in recent years has been as follows:

Average yearly loss in working days per worker employed (main industries)[5]

1936	0.23	1940	0.12	1944	0.49
1937	0.46	1941	0.14	1945	0.39
1938	0.17	1942	0.19	1946	0.25
1939	0.17	1943	0.22	1947*	0.30

* On basis of first 6 months.

Since about 94 per cent of all days lost by strikes over the period have been lost by workers in these main industries, and these workers comprise a minority only of the total working population, it is clear that the 'average loss', spread out over all industrial workers, is infinitesimal.

(b) *Relative to previous losses of working time in comparable periods*

As has been seen, the loss of working days through strikes in recent years is a fraction of what it was thirty years ago, or even twenty years ago.

Average yearly number of working days lost through strikes

Pre-war years		*War years*		*Post-war years*	
1911–14	17,707,000	1915–18	4,230,000	1919–20	30,769,000
1936–39	1,983,000	1940–45*	1,843,000	1945†–47*	2,657,000

* January to June. † July to December.

Although such averages conceal to some extent the losses from abnormally big strikes in the earlier years such as 1912, the exceptional years 1921 and 1926 are excluded, and it should be remarked that with only one exception (1944, in which more working days were lost than in either 1915 or 1916), the total of days lost in each separate year of the later period is smaller than for any of the years in the corresponding earlier period.

[1] *Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes*, p. 11. Such a generalization, made on the basis of British and German statistics, involves the assumption that an hour of work lost through a strike means the same as an hour of work lost through a holiday; but, other considerations apart, the dislocation (measured in terms of time lost/output lost) will be greater in the case of strikes, which are relatively unexpected. See Appendix A to this section.

[2] *22nd Abstract of Labour Statistics* (*Cmd.* 5556), p. 39.

[3] *Labour Management*, vol. XXV, No. 271 (December 1943-January 1944).

[4] July 11th, 1946.

[5] i.e mining and quarrying; textiles; metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc; transport; building, decorating, public works contracting, etc.; clothing. For source of figures of workers in employment see p. 184.

(c) *Relative to working time lost through other causes*

Moreover the loss of working time through strikes has usually been negligible compared with the loss due to other measurable causes (e.g. unemployment, sickness and accidents, mechanical breakdowns and so on). Illness alone, for example, resulted in a loss of 15.6 days per worker in 1944-45.[1]

The loss of working time through strikes in the 1944 estimate quoted a little earlier, presumably relating to war years, was said to amount to about one-fiftieth of the time lost owing to other causes (including sickness but excluding idle time necessitated by changes of programme, delays in deliveries, breakdown of machinery, etc.). In the coal industry the loss from strikes from 1927 to 1936 amounted to rather less than one-fiftieth of the time lost owing to other causes (excluding absenteeism but including accidents, holidays, transport difficulties, and other causes of which easily the biggest was 'want of trade'). During the inter-war years the loss through strikes in this industry was completely eclipsed by the loss from want of trade, and during the war years by that from absenteeism — a rough calculation indicates that in 1938-39 the loss of coal through strikes amounted to rather less that 3½ per cent of the loss attributed to want of trade, and over the war years to a similarly low proportion of the loss attributable to absenteeism.

While such figures are the merest approximations, it is clear that the loss of working time from other causes has usually hitherto been very much greater than the loss from strikes.[2] Again, the loss of time and output through managerial inefficiency, for example, may sometimes be considerable; but while the time lost by workers is measurable, that lost by management is not.

Even if the loss from most of these causes could be actuarially allowed for, and the loss from strikes were regarded as an awkward marginal item, its relative magnitude scarcely seems significant enough to warrant the importance often given to it.

'Abnormal' loss of working time through strikes

The traditional tendency to exaggerate the loss from strikes, however, is partly due to the fact that the shock effect of a big strike may be (as is intended) severe. In any case, while to be restricted to 51/52nds of one's yearly consumption may not seem very important, especially if the loss is likely to be made good sooner or later, to starve for a week is a different matter. In so far, wrote the author of the article on strikes in the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, as strikes can rightly be described as wasteful, 'this is not so much because of the excessive amount of working time which they consume, as because of the disturbance and damage done to industry by the violent breach of continuity'. Some strikes have indeed affected a very wide range of industries and have jolted the whole economy. Such, for example, were the coal strikes of 1912, 1920, 1921 and 1926; one has

[1] October 1944 to September 1945. The figure includes short absences of 1-3 days not revealed by health insurance figures, but excludes absences from injuries and long-term illnesses in institutions. (*Ministry of Health Report* for year ending March 31st, 1946, *Cmd.* 7119, p. 105.)

[2] A comparable order of insignificance is shown however the problem is approached. In 1925, for instance, some eight million working days were lost through strikes (a level never touched after 1929); benefit was paid in respect of some 138 million days of sickness; while unemployment could hardly have accounted for less than 370 million days' loss. Such figures, again, are neither complete nor wholly independent of each other; but the general ratio between them will stand.

only to reflect that in 1926 the miners were on strike for some seven months and the loss of working time per employed miner over the entire industry was more than 120 days, to realize how great was the jolt.

These strikes were made the subject of special surveys by the Board of Trade and Ministry of Labour,[1] and it is worth recalling some of the details, since they are more informative than a mere count of 'working days lost'. In the 6½-week coal strike of 1912 (which involved over 93 per cent of all workers in the industry), employment over all industries fell by 7 per cent and earnings by 12 per cent. The industries most affected were pig-iron (87 per cent of blast furnaces were shut down within 5 weeks), the iron and steel trades (nearly 60 per cent of men unemployed in little over 3 weeks), and tinplate (shortly after the strike began there were some 489 mills running at 80 works, but by the fifth week of the strike there were only 76 mills at 13 works); and all sheet steel works operating in connexion with the tinplate trade were stopped by the fourth week. The railways felt the blow after the third week, when services were heavily cut and there was severe unemployment at the coal-exporting ports; and the curtailment of railway transport also meant short-time working in the railway engineering shops, as well as affecting the building trade. Pottery, glass and brick making — trades closely depending on fuel supplies — were also hit. The industries little affected were shipbuilding and ship-repairing, engineering (apart from the railway shops) and miscellaneous metal trades, and textiles. By the end of the strike, however, effects had been felt in the wool and worsted, hosiery, silk and carpet sections.

In the 3-week national coal strike of 1920, which involved more than a million workers, employment fell by 4.6 per cent in the industries making returns, and wages by as much as 20.4 per cent. That the drop in employment (part of which was probably due to a general trend rather than to the strike itself) was not visibly greater was due to the fact that three emergency orders cut the consumption of coal, gas and electricity by 50 per cent, and this resulted in the spreading of short-time working. The textile trades bore the brunt of the short time, although it spread to other industries; by the end of the second week of the strike, when 243,000 workers had been discharged or suspended (148,000 by staff reductions and 95,000 by outright closure of works), no less than 348,000 were working short time. Apart from textiles, the industries chiefly affected were iron and steel, engineering and shipbuilding, tin-mining, pottery and port labour. Employment on the railways, however, was apparently very little affected, because of the guaranteed week;[2] and the strike produced no appreciable effect on the building trade.

The national strikes of 1926 are exceptional even among big strikes, both in respect of the numbers involved in the General Strike (1,580,000, not including the 1,050,000 miners) and of the duration of the coal strike.[3] Since the impact

[1] See *Labour Gazette* for 1912, pp. 127-8; for 1920, p. 593; for 1926, pp. 6-10.

[2] During the second world war, in the event of an illegal strike affecting employment in 'guaranteed wage' industries, employers were permitted to discontinue paying the guaranteed wage after 4 days' notice. It was also permissible for a worker to hand in his notice after the expiration of the four days, with the assurance that he would be transferred to other employment. (See T.U.C. *Report* for 1942, p. 89.)

[3] The number of workers involved in the 1926 coal strike was in fact smaller than in the strikes of 1912, 1920 and 1921; but this mainly reflects a drop in numbers employed. The number of working days lost, however, was more than twice that of 1921, more than 4 times that of 1912, and more than 8 times that of 1920.

of the General Strike coincided with the opening of the coal strike, the effects were very sharp.

The rise in the number of registered unemployed was immediate, May's total being 15.7 per cent, and June's 16.4 per cent above April's – after which there came a gradual decline which accelerated when the coal strikes ended and arrears of work could be partly made up. These fluctuations were not, of course, wholly due to the strikes; but the extent and persistence of the dislocation can be seen from the following table:

Total registered unemployed, Great Britain and Northern Ireland

	On eve of strike (end April 1926)	*After six months of strike (end October 1926)*
Cotton:	56,708	113,836
Woollen and worsted:	25,012	41,525
Other textiles:	68,168	85,199
Pig iron:	3,426	15,440
Steel:	40,722	102,834
General engineering:	70,213	110,734
Shipbuilding:	83,896	103,479
Boot and shoe:	10,413	17,770
Pottery:	9,663	15,408
Railways:	9,376	20,120
Other trades:	716,232	1,009,541
	1,093,829	1,635,886*

* Excluding, of course, coal miners on strike.

Thus in iron and steel, cotton and railway transport, the number of workers unemployed at the end of October had more than doubled since the strikes began. There are no comparable figures of short-time working; but returns made by certain firms to the Ministry of Labour showed the following position in October 1926:

	Per cent of workers on short time	*Average weekly loss in hours per worker on short time*
Cotton:	21½	17
Woollen:	37½	10½
Worsted:	40	12
Boot and shoe:	45½	12¾
Pottery:	29	9

On the railways, where short time was largely non-existent before the General Strike, some workers were losing up to three days a week: an economy which, it was suggested, might help to offset the drop of £26 millions in gross railway receipts during the first 10 months of 1926.

Coal production fell by 48 per cent in 1926 as compared with 1925. No exact estimate could be made of the production of coal during the seven months of the strike, although a writer in the *Economist*[1] suggested that 'assuming an output midway between that of the "depressed" period of 1925, and the subsidy-fed early months of 1926, and allowing for the production of those miners who returned to work during the stoppage, the net loss of output "commercially dis-

[1] November 20th, 1926.

posable" may be put at 110-113 million tons,[1] representing, at the low pithead prices obtaining in the January-March quarter of this year a gross monetary loss of about £90 millions, of which two-thirds to three-fourths — say £60 to £75 millions — would normally have been accounted for by wages.'

The iron and steel industries, whose workers were in the 'first line' to be called out in the General Strike, were by far the heaviest hit by the continuance of the coal strike, owing to their dependence on fuel. Against a potential seven months' production (estimated as above) of 3,644,000 tons of pig-iron and 4,457,000 tons of steel ingots, actual output between May and November was reckoned to be no more than 200,000 tons and 460,000 tons respectively; and the comparable monetary losses, allowance being made for saving in fuel costs, were put at £10-12 millions and £25-28 millions.

The effects of the strikes on railway traffic also deserve notice. The stoppage of trains was virtually complete during the General Strike, and the subsequent lack of coal continued to affect all train services — even passenger trains,[2] though the decline here (engine-mileage 11 per cent below that of 1925) is less marked than for goods shunting, etc. (17 per cent), and for goods trains proper (20 per cent). The transport of coal usually accounts for well over 30 per cent of railway freight revenue, but in 1926 the amount of coal transported by rail was smaller than in any other year of the period except 1920 — the tonnage of coal, coke and patent fuel carried by rail falling from 194,000 in 1925 to 114,000 in 1926. The need for coal economy on the railways was also illustrated by the proportion of loaded to empty wagons on goods trains; this rose to over 70 per cent in 1926, the highest figure recorded over the period except for the railway-strike year 1919.

The coal strike affected other industries in varying measure: some (such as pottery and tinplate) directly from lack of coal, or because of the higher price and lower quality of the imported coal;[3] many from lack of electrical power;[4] others (such as woollens and worsteds, boot and shoe[5] and so on) also indirectly because of the lowered purchasing power of the heavy industry areas.

The fall in iron and steel exports was less than might have been expected because the finishing trades were able to keep working on stocks and imported materials. The export section of the textile trades was affected by lack of transport during the General Strike, but cloth convoys were organized in some districts, and the fact that road transport was normally used and that centres of production were relatively near the sea meant that the effect was small.

[1] Coal was imported into Britain in 1926 to the extent of rather less than 20 million tons. It came from the following countries: U.S.A., 9.1 m. tons; Germany, 6.9 m.; Holland, 1.9 m.; Belgium, 1.2 m.; Poland, 0.4 m.; other countries, 0.3 m.

[2] There was naturally a disproportionate drop in the sale of workmen's tickets.

[3] 'Between May and October some 14,000,000 tons of coal were imported into Britain at an average price of £2 3s. a ton, but during November contracts were being concluded at well over 70s. a ton. It may be estimated that in the early days of the present month industrial coal supplies (including those available for gas and electricity works, the railways, and manufacturing generally were in the neighbourhood of one-and-a-half million tons a week as compared with about three million in normal times, when the iron and steel industry is an important consumer' (*Economist* (November 20th, 1926)).

[4] The *Economist* index of electrical production in the chief industrial areas of Great Britain (excluding London and Wales) declined on the average by 27 per cent in the months May-September as against January-April — though of course part of this drop is seasonal.

[5] The boot and shoe industry was also hit by the General Strike, since May is the busiest time of year for the trade.

Export statistics throw a further sidelight on the effects of the strikes:

Exports from Great Britain
(*Volume: January-April* 1925 = 100)

	1925 May-Aug.	1926 Jan.-Apr.	1926 May-Aug.
Coal[1]:	92	100	9
Cotton piece-goods:	90	89	82
Cotton yarn:	90	95	75
Woollen tissues:	100	86	88
Worsted tissues:	79	85	80
Machinery:	102	100	93
Iron and steel (total):	97	113	74
Pig iron:	81	109	48
Ferro-alloys:	57	34	19
Railway material:	110	129	87

Effects on the trade balance were slower in making themselves felt, since the contraction of overseas trade during the first months of the coal strike was more or less evenly distributed between exports and imports. In August, however, the excess of imports was £25 millions more than in August 1925, coal naturally being the main item involved,[2] and it was feared that the effects of the strike might be catastrophically cumulative (*a*) because coal needs would grow weekly, (*b*) because exporting industries would exhaust their stocks, and (*c*) because under such conditions a 'formidable increase in the strain upon the position of sterling exchange' was threatened:

> 'the accelerated change in the balance comes at the most awkward moment, namely, during the period when heavy financing of autumn imports normally influences the international exchanges against London. Nor can we expect any increase in invisible exports to countervail this movement of the merchandise balance; on the contrary, shipping earnings have been decreased by the coal stoppage.'[3]

In fact, however, some of these fears soon proved chimerical:

> 'there is reason to believe that the demand for tonnage to load coal from Hampton Roads and elsewhere for British ports has, in the present instance, gone far to offset these losses. "Tramp" freights have in many cases risen to over twice their pre-strike levels, and a good deal of idle tonnage has

[1] The German miners' Union, basing its policy on the 'Brussels decision' of the Miners' International, declared that everything would be done to prevent delivery of coal to Great Britain; a sympathetic strike against the shipment of 'blackleg coal' broke out in Hamburg in October. The ban, however, did not apply to British export markets; there was, in fact, a marked increase in Ruhr coal loadings to those parts of the German coast to which British coal usually penetrated.

[2] In August 1925 the value of British coal exports was £3.2 millions, practically none being imported; in August 1926 the value of coal imports was £7.5 millions, practically none being exported.

[3] *Economist* (September 18th, 1926).

> been absorbed. The liner companies have doubtless suffered a good deal, but over the whole industry gains may possibly slightly outbalance losses.'[1]

Contemporary estimates of the overall losses in 1926 are of historical interest. As regards the General Strike, Mr. Churchill[2] — then Chancellor of the Exchequer — had reckoned that, 'assuming that the coal strike was not greatly prolonged' there would be no 'appreciable disturbance in the out-turn of the current financial year', since the additional revenue which had come from increased customs clearances before the strike began, the savings in normal expenditure which had been effected during the strike itself, and the prospect of increased activity after the strike ended could be expected to countervail any fall in profits or revenue — while the net direct expenditure involved in meeting the strike would probably be less than £750,000. (In fact, it was little more than half this sum.) But since the coal strike *was* 'greatly prolonged', it served, as has been seen, to perpetuate the dislocation of a considerable section of industry.

The first estimates of the prospective daily loss varied from £3-4 millions to £10 millions,[3] and the 'multiplier' effect was prophesied to be one of geometrical progression. By the end of the coal strike, however, overall estimates varied from (Bowley) £166 millions to (Sir Hugh Bell and others) £500-600 millions; a middle estimate being made by the *Economist*:

> 'Altogether, it would seem that about 12 per cent to 20 per cent may be assessed as representing the upper and lower limits of the falling off in industrial activity with, say, 15 per cent as a probable mean figure. On available evidence, we are inclined to put the total national income in the months immediately preceding the strike at the equivalent of £4000 millions a year. A falling off in production of the dimensions mentioned would in the seven months involve a drop in the national income having as its upper and lower limits about £465 millions and £280 millions respectively, with £350 millions as a most probable figure. One might add an extra £15 millions, approximately, to cover additional losses during the General Strike, and £23 millions representing the Government's pre-stoppage subsidy to the coal industry.'[4]

Of course, some of the 'loss' was able to be recouped from the general lowering of wages and raising of profits which followed the defeat of the strikes; but only a very small fraction of lost wages was made up — the Unions' funds were exhausted and in consequence the average of dispute benefit paid per working

[1] *Economist* (November 20th, 1926). The wider effects of the coal strike, on the economy of Continental Europe, are discussed by Hagemeister, *Der Einfluss des englischer Bergarbeiterstreiks im Jahre* 1926 *auf die mitteleuropäische Wirtschaft und den mitteleuropäischen Arbeitsmarkt* (1932).

[2] In *Commons* (May 17th, 1926).

[3] *Economist* (May 8th, 1926). The writer points out that since the production of goods and services of the whole country hardly amounted to more than £80 millions per week, or £12½ millions per working day, an estimate of £10 millions per day was clearly ridiculous. A figure of £31½ millions to £36 millions for the 9 days of the General Strike and the few additional days which passed before work was generally resumed accords better with Lord (then Mr.) Runciman's estimate, made in the Commons, of £30 millions. But even these more modest estimates ignored many offsetting factors.

[4] November 20th, 1926.

day was the lowest ever recorded.[1] The impoverishment of the workers resulted in a prolonged reduction in demand for the things which they could no longer afford, and, possibly, a reduction in efficiency; and the persistence of these effects was underlined by the Report of Sir John Forster's Committee (appointed in 1942) on the Recruitment of Juveniles to the Coal-Mining Industry, where some weight was attached to 'the abnormally low number of births in mining districts in the years 1926-28', when accounting for the small number of entrants to the industry fourteen years later.[2]

It must be emphasized once more that the cataclysm of 1926 was altogether exceptional in the history of British strikes; yet — allowance being made for what has just been said — most of its economic effects had worked themselves out in little over a year: it was the political effects that persisted. Of course, the shock of a big strike generates a political heat so intense that conflicting, alarming and occasionally absurd estimates of economic losses are accepted and acted upon; but, however fatal such abnormalities as that of 1926 might prove today, they were no more fatal then than they seem to be likely now.

Compensating factors

The effects of big strikes of this kind are so obvious that the offsetting and compensating factors, and the speed with which they have operated, are usually ignored. 'The common belief that unreasonably great losses of time and money result from industrial disputes is not well founded. Most of the production lost during a strike is usually made up either before or after the strike, by the persons directly involved or by others.'[3]

It has indeed been argued in the past that strikes are by no means an unqualified economic evil. 'I believe', said Mr. Nasmyth in evidence before the 1867 Commission,

[1] The special strike contributions from various sources, according to the *Report of the T.U.C. General Council on the* 1926 *General Strike and Mining Dispute*, were as follows

T.U.C. General Council's National Strike Fund:

	£	s.	d.
From British Trade Unions	81,337	15	7½
From international sources	50,783	5	2
From 'British Worker'	4,321	4	2
	136,442	4	11½

T.U.C. General Council's Special Miners' Appeal Fund:

	£	s.	d.
From British Trade Unions	9,525	5	2
From international sources	84,318	13	6
	93,843	18	8

Contributions from Russia in 1926 ('Moscow gold') were made the text of many propagandist attacks and counter-attacks. A Minority Movement pamphlet (*The British Mineworkers' Struggle*) asserted that £1,200,000 came from the U.S.S.R., as against £60,000 from Amsterdam. Other pamphlet literature states that the M.F.G.B. received £383,896 from Russian Trade Union and other bodies; that the T.U.C. refused £26,427 from the same source; and that the Government had prevented a further transfer of £100,000. (See Conservative pamphlet, *The Great Betrayal,* and the Labour Research Department's *Red Money*.)

[2] *First Report*, p. 4.

[3] GAGLIARDO, *Strikes in a Democracy, American Economic Review* (March 1941).

> 'that if there were a debtor and creditor account made up of strikes and lock-outs with the interests of society, up to a certain point they would have been found to be a benefit. Such has been the stimulus applied to ingenuity by the intolerable annoyance resulting from strikes and lock-outs, that it has developed more than anything those wonderful improvements in automaton machinery that produce you a window frame or the piston rod of a steam-engine of such an accuracy as would make Euclid's mouth water to look at. These things are pouring in in quantities as the result of the stimulus given to ingenuity through the annoyance of strikes. It is not being coaxed on by some grand reward in the distance, but I think a kick from behind is sometimes as useful as a gentle leading forward in front.'

(Pigou, who quoted this passage, instanced certain nineteenth-century cases in point.[1]) But even if strikes are no longer credited with this tonic effect, it is undeniable that there have been many ways in which strike losses — losses to employers, workers and public alike — have been compensated for or offset. Even now, measures to combat waste and inefficiency which may be developed during a strike, increased overtime working, a decline in absenteeism and so on which may follow a strike — such factors will defy measurement but should not be wholly ignored.[2]

The question has sometimes been a far wider one than this. Indeed, in a period of embittered labour relations even a big strike may be economically preferable to a prolonged era of smouldering hostility, ca' canny or chronic apathy: 'in fact,' wrote the *Economist* in 1926,[3] 'many of our bankers feel that if the threat of a General Strike, which has been hanging over Britain for years, can be dissipated by a few weeks of actual strike, a great benefit will have been bought at a relatively slight price.' It is, of course, inexpedient for the winning side to push its advantage too far, as Mr. Bevin tried to argue when he pleaded with Mr. Baldwin for an assurance that there should be no victimization after the General Strike: 'if there is a resumption with a sort of good feeling, then the thing gets back again on to its usual footing very quickly. If there is not, then it does affect the restoration. I remember after the 1912 strike, when we were beaten, Sir Joseph Broodbank went into it very carefully, and the loss of output of transport was something like 25 per cent [*sic*] for some time, until the war. We do not want that kind of thing.'[4]

In fact, one cannot draw up an exact account of strike-losses. One man's meat is another man's poison: 'this vague concept, "cost of strikes", necessarily includes theoretical estimates of cost to employers, workers, and the public. Practically, these three elements cannot be grouped together. The employer might consider a wage increase gained through a strike as a loss to him; the workers obviously consider it a gain which, in time, will more than offset the lack of pay envelopes during the strike. Similarly, local merchants may profit

[1] *Principles and Methods of Industrial Peace* (1905), pp. 181-2.

[2] To take a somewhat unusual contemporary example, West Cannock mining strikers in 1947 'admitted their error later and more than made good the loss in output by attending at the pit on the following Saturday and working at "plain time" rates'. (National Coal Board, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for* 1947, p. 18.)

[3] May 15th, 1926.

[4] Official report of the Downing Street Meeting, May 12th, 1926 (*Daily News, Strike Fortnight* (1926), p. 27).

through the increased wages although their businesses suffered during the strike. Because of these conflicting factors, an estimate of the cost of individual strikes or the cost of all strikes in a given period is misleading as well as inaccurate.'[1]

Thus (*a*) the direct quantitative data are dubious, (*b*) in any case the data take no account of the compensating factors, and (*c*) some losses to one section of the community are gains to others. It is not surprising that the U.S.A. Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics gave up attempting to estimate the precise cost of strikes in 1945-46 as an 'impossible job'. But, as we have tried to show, this does not prevent one from getting a general idea of their effects in a given context.

APPENDIX A

Losses from strikes and absenteeism compared

Direct comparisons are impossible for most industries, although there are some indications for coal mining.

Absenteeism is an unsatisfactory term. Even after the distinction has been made between 'involuntary' and 'voluntary' absences, it is still probable that sickness as a cause of lost time has been very much underestimated and slackness over-estimated.[2] Where absenteeism counts as 'voluntary' if a doctor's certificate is not forthcoming, many short absences of one or two days — for example because of a cold, a minor accident, or a transport breakdown on the way to work — are put down to slackness:[3] 'a miner becomes so used to having his hands and body knocked about that he hesitates before reporting every little knock; a man who feels sure that he can return to work after two or three days may neglect to report at all.'[4]

More important, absenteeism figures may be inflated by the method used to arrive at them. The 'absenteeism percentage' is calculated on a shifting basis, as a percentage of all manshifts thought to be 'possible'. 'Possible' manshifts represent what (after allowance has been made for holidays, strikes, unemployment, mechanical breakdowns, etc.) colliery managers feel they can expect in particular circumstances. Thus in wartime, when maximum production was needed, holidays were curtailed and 'want of trade' was no longer a cause of loss of coal, a considerably longer working week was reckoned as 'possible'; and though longer hours were in fact worked, the gap between the actual and the 'possible' was widened. This gave, to quote Mr. Harold Wilson,[5] a 'misleading and contentious' picture. (Of course, absenteeism figures may also be 'deflated' when hours are shortened.)

According to published data, absenteeism among miners was more severe in the second world war than in the first. During the first war, despite an increase in the rate of accidents and therefore presumably in 'involuntary' absenteeism, absenteeism as a whole tended to fall (which implies a marked decline in 'volun-

[1] PETERSON, *Strikes in the United States*, 1880-1936 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *Bulletin*, No. 651 (1937)), p. 11.
[2] See LORD HENRY BENTINCK, M.P., *Industrial Fatigue* (1918), p. 22.
[3] See I.F.R.B. *Report*, No. 51 (1928): *A Study of Absenteeism in a Group of Ten Collieries.*
[4] COOMBES, *I Am a Miner* (1939), pp. 69-70.
[5] See *New Deal for Coal* (1945), pp. 54-5.

tary' absenteeism);[1] the sharp rise in 1918 being largely ascribable to the influenza epidemic. In 1914-18 the miners already showed more desire to change their way of life than did other workers, and enlisted in large numbers from the first; and this uncontrolled recruiting (particularly high among faceworkers) proved a great strain on the industry.[2] But in 1939-45 the labour force was older and more embittered, was increasingly replenished with conscript labour, and had greater demands made upon it — on all of which the absenteeism percentage is a commentary.

The losses from strikes and absenteeism can be directly compared, in a crude fashion, by assuming that the percentage of coal 'lost' by absenteeism is the same as the percentage of 'possible' manshifts lost. Thus if the year's actual output were 180 million tons and the absenteeism percentage were 10, the coal 'lost' by absenteeism would be 20 million tons, and the 'possible' yearly output would be 200 million tons. If to this we add coal 'lost' through causes other than absenteeism (i.e. through recognized holidays, strikes, want of trade, accidents and repairs to machinery, rail transport difficulties and want of wagons, etc.), we obtain an estimate of 'conceivable' output — that is to say, of the output of a mining industry immune from absenteeism, strikes, accidents, transport bottlenecks, and even the fluctuations of the trade cycle, where men and machines worked without stopping even for holidays or running repairs. While such a concept is fantastic, it at least enables one to compare the loss of coal through various causes.

Percentages of coal 'lost' through various causes, 1938-47

Years	*Holidays*	*Strikes*	*Absenteeism*	*Want of trade*	*All other causes*
1938–39	18.6	1.4	31.0	42.7	6.3
1940–45	19.9	2.7	65.8	3.1	8.5
1946–47	20.3	2.7	71.7 (*Vol.* 37.6, *Invol.* 34.1)	0.0	5.3

(Source: *Ministry of Fuel and Power Statistical Digest*, 1946 *and* 1947 (*Cmd.* 7548), Tables 3, 11 and 16. The absenteeism percentages before 1943 were recalculated.)

This calculation assumes that one man's absence means simply the loss of one man's daily output — which is unlikely to be quite true in practice, because unforeseen absenteeism may cause dislocation. The effect of this dislocation

[1] That there was a decline in 'voluntary' absenteeism is borne out by Sir C. Seely's statement (*Commons*, May 15th, 1918): 'Before the War colliers took very considerable holidays, and, in addition to the regular holidays which they took, all those who worked on household collieries used to have a great many holidays, partly intentional and partly unintentional, during the summer months. Since the War these men have given their time, and as a result this country has not been short of coal.'

[2] The excessive recruitment of miners to the forces was often remarked on. Battalions of 'mining pals' were recruited in the early stages. By the end of February 1915, about 190,000 miners had enlisted (some 17 per cent of the labour force, and a still greater percentage of the adult labour force); by July 1915 the figure was 230,000; by March 1916, 282,000; by March 1917, 288,000; and recruiting continued. (See Cole, *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry* (1923), and *Hansard, ad loc.*) Under these circumstances, it was remarkable how far output per man was maintained and, in the early stages at least, increased: Mr. Runciman stated (*Commons*, July 19th, 1915) that, allowing for the replacement of enlisted men, the labour force had gone down from 7 to 6 and output down only by 10 to 9; and Mr. Rea, two months later (*Commons*, September 23rd, 1915) said that despite the fact that the new entrants to the industry were less skilled, the August 1915 output was actually greater than for August of the record year 1913.

can be seen to some extent in respect of other causes of loss. In Tables 6 and 16 of the Ministry of Fuel and Power's *Statistical Digest from* 1938 (*Cmd.* 6538), figures of manshifts or mandays lost from various causes (other than absenteeism), together with figures of coal lost, are given from 1938 to the first quarter of 1944. If the figure of coal lost is divided by the figure of mandays or manshifts lost, the result is usually a number somewhat higher than the mere output per manshift (OMS). This implies that the dislocation caused by various forms of stoppage increases the loss.

It is only in respect of recognized holidays that the output 'lost' is reckoned as the product of manshifts 'lost' and the OMS, and this can be checked for the various colliery districts.[1] The loss of coal per manshift lost through causes other than holidays, however, is higher than the OMS. The method of calculating total coal lost through 'accidents and repairs', 'rail transport difficulties and want of wagons', and 'other causes' seems to be to multiply manshifts lost by a set figure — the figure being about the same for all these causes within each district, but differing from district to district. For Great Britain as a whole in 1943, coal lost per manshift-lost-from-these-causes was as follows: accidents and repairs, 1.35; rail transport difficulties, etc., 1.78; other causes, 1.36 (tons).

The loss of coal per *strike-manshift* seems, as one might expect, to be more haphazard, and varies greatly between districts. For Great Britain as a whole, it was 1.58 in 1943; and thus, while the figures cannot be pressed too hard, it may be accepted that the dislocating effect of strikes generally produces a loss per manshift considerably in excess of the mere OMS. Absenteeism must also have a dislocating effect; although probably, since absenteeism is more like a running sore than a sharp cut, the dislocation caused by absenteeism is somewhat less than that caused by strikes.[2] Thus if the loss of coal per strike-manshift is about 1.6 tons, we might assume that the corresponding loss of coal per absentee-manshift was say 1.3 or 1.4 tons, and might multiply the number of manshifts lost through absenteeism[3] by such a figure to get an estimate of total coal lost through absenteeism.

Alternatively an attempt could be made to calculate manshifts lost through various causes, instead of coal lost. Both methods give a rough idea of the relation between the losses due to strikes and to absenteeism (strikes appearing in any case as a very small cause of loss as compared with absenteeism, particu-

[1] For Great Britain as a whole, the ratio between manshifts 'lost' and coal 'lost' through recognized holidays was 1.04 in 1943, while the OMS was 1.03; but this apparent discrepancy can be explained by the uneven incidence of holidays as between districts of differing productivity.

[2] As might be expected, the dislocation is worse where mining processes are mechanized. See South Wales coalfield report, summarized in *N.U.M. Annual Conference Report* for 1946, p. 58; also ZWEIG, *Men in the Pits* (1948), p. 58.

[3] An estimate of manshifts lost through absenteeism could be made in a number of ways. If A = 'possible' manshifts (apart from holidays, strikes, accidents and repairs, rail transport difficulties, etc.), B = manshifts actually worked (i.e. actual output in tons ÷ the OMS), and C = the absenteeism percentage, then $A = \frac{100B}{100\text{-}C}$.
A — B is then the number of manshifts lost through absenteeism. Alternatively, if the weekly number of manshifts per worker given as 'possible' = X, the weekly number of manshifts per worker given as actually worked = Y, and the number of workers = Z, then 52XZ (i.e. the total of manshifts 'possible' during the year) — 52YZ (the total of manshifts actually worked during the year) = the number of manshifts lost through absenteeism.

larly during the war years); but the figures of lost manshifts and lost output through absenteeism cannot be reconciled well enough to enable further conclusions to be drawn.

As regards the experience of other industries, the Industrial Health Research Board suggested in 1944 that peacetime absenteeism should not exceed 5 per cent of possible hours; in wartime, the figure rises to 6-8 per cent for men and 10-15 per cent for women. While these figures are less extreme than those for the mining industry,[1] they remain far in excess of the hours lost through strikes.

APPENDIX B

Expenses incidental to strikes

(a) *Insurance*

Employers' funds for mutual indemnification in strikes have already been mentioned, and other forms of insurance against strikes have been undertaken. Workers, of course, cannot (except through their Unions) insure against the losses which they may incur by striking, since they are formally responsible for the strike — a fundamental principle of all insurance being that the risk insured against must be beyond the control of the policyholder. Thus also, insurance companies have generally refused to insure employers directly against the loss of profits and so on which may result from a strike, since employers have too much control over its outbreak and duration. Insurances have sometimes been effected for very short periods to protect employers against the late delivery of their goods owing to strikes;[2] but in such cases the insurance has not related to possible strikes of the employees of the insured firms, but, for example, to possible strikes of dockers at ports of loading.

However, employers have been able to insure (i) against *loss of or damage to property* resulting from strikes and lockouts, and sometimes (ii) against *loss of profits as a consequence of such damage.* Damage is specified in both cases, for although employers may possibly provoke strikes, it is assumed that they would scarcely connive at the destruction of their own property. This kind of insurance was more common, of course, during the disturbances of the early part of the period, and examples may be given from *The Times* reports. In 1911 the 'usual rate' to cover goods in warehouses and so on was 5/- on £100 per month, the rate fluctuating as national strikes seemed more or less imminent. Thus on August 4th of that year, the rate rose to £1,[3] but fell to 10/- by August 8th;

[1] For comment on the special causes of absenteeism in mining, see Mr. Gaitskell's speech in the Commons debate of November 10th, 1949.

[2] It is of interest that a witness (Mr. George Smith, of Smith and Taylor, building contractors to the Foreign Office) told the Royal Commission on Trade Unions of 1867 that 'the only arrangement we make with reference to strikes is to get a clause put into the contract that in the event of a strike, which is of general operation in the trade, and not the result of any feeling between the particular master and his men, there should then be allowance made by the architect during the duration of that strike. If, for instance, the building is contracted to be done in two years, and a strike of that character occurs, we are not to be pressed for time.' (*First Report, Q.* 2828, p. 103.)

[3] This insurance was in respect of direct damage only: the sinking or burning of goods on shipboard, for example. But it did not cover such indirect damage as the loss of cargoes owing to the absence of refrigeration because no coal could be loaded.

though ten days later underwriters found 'little time to attend to anything else'.[1]

On January 13th, 1912, insurance for direct damage incurred in a coal strike was quoted at 1 per cent for 12 months. Insurance for loss of coalowners' profits due to mine-flooding stood at £2 10s. 0d. per cent on January 9th, and at £5 5s. 0d. on February 20th; railway trucks were insured against damage or looting; and in one instance ten Lancashire cows were insured against strike damage in excess of £25, at £5 0s. 0d. per cent.[2] The lives of special constables were insured for 30s. per man for 12 months, £150 being paid in case of death in the course of duty (members of the 'Civilian Force' were valued at £200). The prevalence of strike insurance at this time is exemplified by the fact that in February 1912 the London Corn Trade Association insisted that all insurance policies after March 1st must provide cover for strike risks.

Relative strike-risks in London and South Wales are illustrated by the rates obtaining this month. On March 2nd, 1912, private houses in London were insured for 2s. 6d. per cent; in South Wales the rate was 5s. per cent, and 10s. per cent for the houses of mining officials(!). Provision shops were insured at 5s. per cent in London; in South Wales, at £5 5s. 0d. per cent. (At about the same time, goods on railways were covered at 5s. per cent, timber at £1 per cent, and motor cars (valued, for example, at £300 and insured for the year) at £2 10s. per cent for damage over £25 worth.) By the 26th of the month provision shops in Britain generally were being insured for £5 5s. 0d. per cent, except in South Wales, where they were not being insured 'at any price'.

After the war, despite the unrest, and despite the general rise in prices, strike insurance rates were somewhat lower at first: in September-October 1919 they ranged from 10s. per cent for 12 months (damage to food stocks) to 5s. or even 2s. 6d. per cent (damage to property generally). Similar rates obtained in the following year: in September-October 1920 private houses were being insured for 1s. and 1s. 6d. per cent for 12 months; commercial property for 2s. 6d. per cent; warehoused goods in docks, 3s. 4d. per cent; jewellers' goods, 5s. or 10s. (according as their shops had shutters or not); but for colliery property above and below ground the rate was £5 per cent (which did not cover flood damage). The scale of strike insurance is illustrated by the report on October 23rd, 1920, that one firm had taken out a policy at Lloyd's of £2½ millions sterling.[3]

[1] 'Freak' requests for strike insurance were fairly common: for example, one man wanted to secure an indemnity should he and his wife be unable to return by train from Margate on August 28th — for an indemnity of £20 he was charged £2 10s. 0d. Business men also applied at Lloyd's for policies indemnifying them against loss if they should be prevented from getting to work because of the railway strike; the premium was £1, and the company undertook to pay £2 for each day in the following four weeks during which no train was available to carry the insured from home between 8 and 11 a.m. and from the City between 5 and 10 p.m. (Since the maximum possible payment for a 30-day month was £60, the premium worked out at 33/4 per cent.)

[2] It should be noted that under the 1886 Riot Damages Act compensation could be got for damage through riots out of the Police rates of the district, provided the claimant had in no way abetted the rioters.

[3] Strike insurance rates in Ireland were significantly higher: at the end of June 1920 property was being insured in Dublin at £2 per cent for six months, and in Londonderry at £3 per cent for the same period; the rate for spirits in warehouses being £5 5s. 0d. per cent. Three months later, goods in grocers' and wine merchants' shops were being insured at as much as £10 per cent; and even private houses for £2.

At this stage there was direct betting on the possibility of a strike, by means of insurance and reinsurance. On September 9th, insurance companies were demanding premiums of 25 per cent from those who wished to insure against the possibility of a strike before the end of the month; and this was soon raised to 50 per cent. Some policyholders, wishing to reinsure against total loss if there should after all be no coal strike, were offered 60 per cent, later reduced to 40 per cent as the strike seemed imminent. These disturbed years probably marked the peak of strike insurance.

A typical example of a 'Riots and Civil Commotions Extension Clause' runs as follows:[1]

> 'This Policy . . . is extended to cover Loss of and/or Damage to the property hereby insured directly caused by persons taking part in riots, strikes, lock-outs and/or in labour disturbances or civil commotions and/or by persons of malicious intent acting on behalf of or in connection with any political organization including fire and/or explosion directly caused by any of the foregoing wherever originating.
>
> 'Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein this Policy does not extend to cover Loss or Damage directly or indirectly occasioned by, happening through or in consequence of: —
>
> '(1) Confiscation, nationalization, requisition, occupation or wilful destruction by or under the order of the Government or any public or local authority of the country in which the property is situated.
>
> '(2) Loss of possession arising out of the illegal occupation, requisition or detention of the insured property or of any premises, vehicle or thing containing insured property, but this shall not be deemed to exclude liability for damage to or removal of insured property during such illegal occupation, requisition or detention.
>
> '(3) Consequential Loss or Damage of any kind or description whatsoever including delay, deterioration and/or loss of market.
>
> '(4) Cessation of work.
>
> '(5) War, invasion, acts of foreign enemies, hostilities (whether war be declared or not), civil war, rebellion, revolution, insurrection, military or usurped power. . . .
>
> 'There shall be no cancelling of this extension and no return of premium shall be paid in respect hereof for short interest.'

As has been pointed out, insurance extension clauses of this kind may also cover loss of profits resulting from interruption of or interference with the business caused by strikes, but only if this is consequent upon material damage or destruction of property. However, it is a commentary on the period that, except in 1926 and to a lesser extent in 1931, few industrialists saw fit to extend their insurances on these lines.

[1] *Riots and Civil Commotions Extension Clause*, No. 1 (approved by Lloyd's Underwriters' Fire and Non-Marine Association) (January 1st, 1938).

(b) *Expenditure on strike-prevention and strike-breaking*

The anticipation of strikes may, as we have seen, involve special provisions to prevent their outbreak; and when they have broken out, further expense may be incurred in the effort to maintain essential services. Much of this, of course, has been borne by Governments rather than employers.

It is not possible to give a comprehensive account of expenses incurred in the effort to prevent strikes; such an account should, no doubt, include a part of the cost of maintaining conciliation and arbitration boards,[1] joint industrial councils, etc., as well as a part of the administrative expenses of Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations. There are, however, a few details available of the direct expenses of strike-prevention. The cost, for example, of the scheme operated in 1919 by the Strike Emergency Committee to cope with the railway strike and to provide against the possibility of an even bigger strike by the Triple Alliance was £500,000 (of which expenditure on food — cost of accommodation, depreciation and loss — represented £160,000). It was suggested that a permanent organization should be set up, at a cost of £15,000 a year; but this was rejected in 1920 on the grounds of expense, with the result that only a skeleton organization was maintained by 'two permanent officials and a clerk' at a cost (in 1922) of £1050.[2]

The cost of breaking a big strike — which may involve, for example, paying extravagantly high wages to blacklegs — may also be considerable. After the General Strike of 1926 a Supplementary Estimate (introduced on July 6th) showed the following items.

	£
Civil Commissioner organization and miscellaneous services	78,000
Food organization (England & Wales) (net):	119,000
Transport organizations (England & Wales):	20,000
Coal organizations:	35,000
British Gazette (net):	16,000
Civil Constabulary Reserve:	65,000
Grants in respect of police expenditure:	100,000
	£433,000

The low cost of transport was due to the fact that the Government were able to operate, as we have seen, almost entirely through the trade; hauliers were made to give priority to the transport of food, and, in fact, 'the consumer, and not the Government, paid for haulage'.[3] The price of milk, for example, was raised by 2d. a quart on the first day of the strike in order to pay for transport; and in the one case during the strike of a service run directly by the Government (the Board of Trade's milk distribution scheme for London), a lightning profit was made, of £73,000. A grant of £40 had been proposed in respect of all private cars registered for strike 'emergency' purposes, but it is not clear whether such payments were widely made. The pay offered to special constables serving

[1] For instance, the cost of working the arbitration and conciliation machinery in the boot-and-shoe industry was estimated at £50,000 per year (the equivalent of the value of two hours' output of the whole industry — a proportion comparable with that of working time lost through strikes in certain other industries where the arbitration and conciliation machinery is less effective). See *The Times* (September 24th, 1948).

[2] See Glasgow, *General Strikes and Road Transport* (1926), pp. 21-2.

[3] Ibid., pp. 24, 30, and Milne-Bailey, *Trade Unions and the State* (1934), pp. 78, 79.

away from their homes was generous: the *British Worker* bitterly compared their rates with those of the miners: 'For the mine labourer 31s. 7½d., for the cheapest special 46s. 3d. plus free housing.'[1]

* * *

Section 3: Social and political effects

We must consider, in conclusion, the social and political effects of strikes. It is difficult to trace the effects of strikes on the habits of people at large, although they, as well as the strikers themselves, are sometimes affected; indeed the political repercussions of strikes depend largely on the extent to which the strikes affect, or are thought likely to affect, the public. Here, however, we are on more or less uncharted ground, and can but select certain aspects of the questions raised.

Effects on people's habits

The social effects of strikes have hardly been touched on. True, the effects of single strikes are usually negligible, except in so far as they compel the adoption of substitutes for the commodity or service whose production or operation has been interrupted, and thus give rise to a real change of behaviour. The 1937 'Coronation' bus strike, however, caused such a change, which was reflected in the fortunes of the L.P.T.B.:[2]

> 'the effect of the strike on the Board's revenues was more severely felt after the strike had been concluded. In the four weeks following the strike the receipts of Central buses averaged £270,527 per week, while in the four weeks preceding the strike they averaged £282,956 per week, a difference of £12,429 per week, for which no satisfactory explanation other than the strike can be found. This unhappy consequence, while diminishing in intensity, still continues and helps to explain the poor traffics recorded week by week recently.
>
> 'The event serves to illustrate how sensitive traffic is to disturbance. The strike not only gave a stimulus to the use of other forms of transport, but induced people to take to walking. It also effected some permanent shift of traffic to the Underground and Main Line Railways. The travelling public do not readily change their habits. When they have accustomed themselves to a particular form of transport and to a particular mode of travelling to and from their work they tend to follow the same course day by day. Once these habits are interrupted and new methods are established the public similarly tend to adhere to them until some abnormal circumstance happens which causes them to change again.'[3]

[1] *British Worker* (May 9th, 1926).

[2] However, under the Pooling Scheme with the Main Line Railways, the L.P.T.B. was entitled to some 62 per cent of receipts from local passenger traffic in the Board's area after the deduction of certain operating and other allowances. On balance, in fact, the Board did better than in previous years.

[3] *London Passenger Transport Board, Fourth Annual Report and Accounts* (1937), p. 9.

Moreover, strikes may sometimes cause a social cleavage which spreads beyond the particular factory or industry concerned. Warner and Low, for example,[1] discussing an American strike, described the line-up of local organizations:

> 'Associations whose memberships derived largely from the . . . lower classes, favoured the strikers from the start. Other associations whose memberships were predominantly upper class . . . took the employers' side throughout the strike. The Chamber of Commerce divided its allegiance: the members who owned small retail stores were mostly lower class and derived their trade from the workers — they were for the strikers; the members who were manufacturers or owned large retail or upper-class stores were against the strikers. The Chamber of Commerce played an important part in the strike, and this split in its allegiance became important in later phases.'

Some sort of 'line-up' is familiar enough, although it is curious to read of this particular strike that 'the workers and the police were both members of the lower classes . . . The sympathies of the police were with their friends, the strikers, not with the absentee owners of the factory'.

Strikes and crime

The police are not generally noted, despite their possible origins, as strikers' friends. Indeed, since some strikes are in a sense protests against the established order, it is not surprising to find emphasis being laid on their 'anti-social' effects: not only on the injuries that may be inflicted on the public, but on their relation to criminality in general. Another American writer[2] (a Catholic) has quoted the opinion that 'incidentally yet almost invariably' strikes involve 'drunkenness, irreligion, loss of self-respect both on the part of women and men, particularly the former. In times of strikes reason seems to lose its sway over the most normal minds and the best and most circumspect of persons tend to become lowered and demoralized'. Yet the criminal consequences of strikes have been small in this country, at any rate since the days of the Industrial Revolution — a matter on which patriotic sociologists are congratulatory. Violence by strikers is uncommon; nor are British employers accustomed, as are some American employers, to budget for expenditure on munitions. The 'restraint' exercised by the London dockers after the 1889 strike, for example, was warmly praised: the Recorder of London, in his approving comment to the grand jury that not a single case on the charge sheet was connected with the strike, said:

> 'The whole history of the world did not afford so wonderful an instance of self-control on the part of suffering men with starving wives and children, and such discretion and forbearance on the part of the authorities.'[3]

Some writers have stressed the importance, particularly on grounds of discipline and public order, of keeping alive the strikers' sense of common purpose. In 1889 this was done by means of strikers' processions which were not without

[1] *The Social System of the Modern Factory; The Strike: A Social Analysis* (Yale 1947,) pp. 35n, 43.

[2] McLean, *The Morality of the Strike* (New York, 1921), pp. 79-80.

[3] Quoted by Llewellyn Smith and Nash, *The Story of the Dockers' Strike* (1889), p. 101f.

a touch of pageantry: 'emblems quaint and pathetic were carried in the ranks, the dockers' cat and the sweaters' cat, the dockers' dinner and the sweaters' dinner, the dockers' baby and the sweaters' baby, diminutive and ample respectively' — and, comments the history,[1] 'the leaders could hardly have occupied themselves better than in organizing and leading the strike procession. It kept masses of men occupied and interested, only second in importance to keeping them fed, and it was a grand opportunity for enforcing a respect for order and discipline amongst the heterogeneous dock populace.'

Yet even in the General Strike, when efforts of this kind were local and uncoordinated, many writers have praised the strikers' discipline and self-control.[2] Indeed, a tribute to all concerned, and in particular to the strikers' 'spirit of reasonable orderliness', came even from the ranks of Tuscany: Sir John Simon insisted in the Commons on May 4th, 1927, that 'we really do a very grave injury to our own national reputation if we do not always remember that that was the feature of the General Strike which particularly impressed the world at large'. And Hermann Mannheim, in a study of crime in England between the wars, summarizes the little he has to say of the influence of strikes on crime with the following words:

> 'When dealing with problems of mass mentality and criminality some sociologists have maintained that ordinary decent citizens, even as members of an excited crowd, are not likely to commit serious outrages. This theory stands in marked contrast to the traditional view that great numbers of people, assembled for a common purpose, are always in grave danger of falling victims to unscrupulous agitators who may easily lead them to actions of which each of them individually would never be capable. The history of English labour disputes seems rather to endorse the first view.'[3]

Crime seems to be more closely connected with unemployment than with strikes, although there are big differences in the experience of different areas. Moreover, the character of the crimes associated with strikes, their motives, and the likelihood of their being punished, are very different from those of the crimes associated with unemployment. In any case the pressure felt during a strike is usually shorter than that felt during a spell of unemployment, and the sense of common purpose and corporate discipline is greater.

The reports of workers' violence in strikes are often exaggerated, as was made clear by the 1911 Home Office Report on *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales*.[4] The strikes of that year were bitter, and there were some rough episodes;

[1] *The Story of the Dockers' Strike* (1889), pp. 82-3, 85-6.

[2] ROBERTSON, in his *Narrative of the General Strike* (*Economic Journal*, September 1926) notes certain exceptions: but these were neither frequent nor serious enough to invalidate the general point. The dangers of the situation were increased 'by the presence in the population of a semi-hooligan element of chronically unemployed'.

[3] *Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Two Wars* (1940), p. 159. He is careful to add: 'On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that strikes, just as unemployment, may show their criminological consequences only after several years. Thus, the General Strike of 1926 may have been partly responsible for the increase in crime which began in 1930.' Later on in the book (p. 282) the author quotes the instance of a printer whose career was broken by the General Strike, and who relapsed into crime some years after. But here again it may have been the unemployment-experience rather than the strike-experience which was the deciding factor.

[4] *Cd.* 5568 (1911), pp. 21-2, 31, 49.

yet the impression remains that there was far less disturbance than might have been expected in view of the attitude of the colliery managers. Partly from panic, and partly from other kinds of self-interest, they called in police and military wholesale. One manager, says the Report, 'said he feared men would come down from other collieries and attack him, but, as far as we could judge, these fears were somewhat remote'; police 'were sent for solely in order to enable the deduction from wages to be made, and . . . the effect of their arrival has been to send the men out on strike! If there had been no large force of Police here to draw on, the Manager admitted that the deduction would not have been made, and there would have been no strike'. In general 'the military are preferred partly on account of their small cost to the colliery owner'. In one case a terrified appeal came from a colliery manager saying that a body of 400 armed strikers was marching over the hills in the direction of his colliery; forty Metropolitan policemen were sent uphill in great haste, and arrived 'to find that the armed strikers were the Lancashire Fusiliers taking their walk'. General Macready's memorandum summed up the situation:

> 'There seemed a general idea that managers were at liberty to carry out any schemes they pleased, such as the importation of "blacklegs", or fresh work in the pits, in short any measure without consideration as to how it might influence the strikers, and that the military would then be called upon to support such action . . . the information from the managers was in practically every case so exaggerated as to be worthless.'

It is true that the 1911 railway strike was accompanied by a certain amount of Jew-baiting[1] and looting; there was certainly considerable violence in the Irish strikes of 1912-13; the national coal strike of 1912 coincided with a rise in the number of crimes, particularly against the person and against property but 'without violence'; the 1919 railway strike was marked by one or two attempts to damage trains by displacing signals or greasing the tracks, and while in 1926 the General Strike left little immediate mark on the crime statistics (apart from offences against the special Emergency Regulations), the long coal strike did result in a number of characteristic offences. The Introduction to the Criminal Statistics of 1926 states that the increase in indictable offences (73 per cent of which came under the heading of simple and minor larcenies) occurred almost entirely in colliery districts:

> 'During the period from May 1st to 19th December (when the Emergency Regulations expired) 7960 persons in all were proceeded against for offences (whether indictable or non-indictable) connected with the coal stoppage and the general strike: 4656 of them for offences against the ordinary law and 3304 for breaches of the Emergency Regulations. Doubtless many other offences were connected less directly with the same events. Offences of simple larceny and minor larcenies rose from 66,926 in 1925 to 81,211 in 1926.'[2]

[1] LADEN, *La Grève de* 1911 *dans les Chemins de Fer Anglais* (1913), pp. 217-18. The explanation, according to *The Times* (August 25th, 1911), seems to have been that Jewish property-owners evicted their tenants 'in trying circumstances'.

[2] Introduction to *Criminal Statistics* (1926), p. 5 and *passim*.

As Mannheim points out, many of these 'larcenies' were thefts of coal or other fuel, and many were probably not committed by strikers but by people taking advantage of the diversion of police from their ordinary duties.

Among the typical strike offences, charges of intimidation rose from 105 to 994[1] and those of malicious damage from 13,711 to 20,301. On the railways, a passenger engine was reported derailed at Bridlington owing to the points having been tampered with; during rioting at Middlesbrough, heavy lorries were chained to the rails in an attempt to wreck a passenger train: 'the crowd prevented the closing of the level crossing gates, invaded the passenger station, wrecked the goods station and did serious damage.'[2] In all, ten cases of 'destroying railways' were reported — more than in any post-war year but less than the average for 1900-04 or 1910-14. On the other hand, charges of betting and gaming fell by over 30 per cent — a phenomenon which may be ascribed to the atmosphere of emergency as well as to the lack of marginal petty cash. Attempted suicides were higher than in any year since the war, but lower than in the pre-war years. In any case the increase in crime generally was not very great.

To some extent, of course, the attitude of the police during a strike may itself be provocative. While the record of the British police in strikes seems to compare very favourably with that of the police in other countries, there have been complaints (for example in a number of South Wales strikes, in the 1937 strike at Harworth, and so on) of 'unnecessary' brutality and provocation on the police side. In June 1912 the Home Office instituted an inquiry concerning the behaviour of the police in a disturbance at Rotherhithe connected with the transport strike; in the words of a letter sent to the Commissioner of Police, 'if the whole of the inmates of Colney Hatch had been let loose in the same thoroughfare no such brutal, inhuman, and disgraceful conduct would have been witnessed as had been seen on the part of the police. They were "nothing but a wild pack of murderers, and it was no fault of theirs that the carnage was not worse".'[3] This is a strong picture of a more or less isolated instance, however, and such denunciations are — probably deservedly — rare.

The police strikes of 1918 and 1919 come in a different category.[4] That of 1918 seems to have taken the underworld by surprise; *The Times* (September 2nd, 1918) considered that the strike would have 'a lasting place in the social annals of the country, for the reason — if for no other — of the proof it afforded of the people's ingrained respect for law and order'. But in the following year there was more warning, for a strike ballot had been taken two months earlier; and the consequences of this strike — in Liverpool at least, where nearly half the city's police force were involved, and where the population is a peculiarly mixed one — were severe. In one district,

[1] The yearly average numbers of persons charged with intimidation, under the relevant Acts, have been as follows: 1915-19, 25; 1920-24, 109; 1925-29, 238; 1930-34, 63; 1935-39, 60; 1940-45, 1. (See *Criminal Statistics (England and Wales)*, 1939-45, *Cmd.* 7227.)

[2] *Daily Graphic* (May 8th, 1926).

[3] *The Times* (June 26th, 1912). Mr. Chester Jones, in his official report (*Cd.* 6367), summed up by saying that no blame should attach to the police for dispersing the 'large and dangerous crowd', although 'in the process some persons were roughly handled'; but 'in the subsequent pursuit some members of the Police Force employed were guilty of excesses, and some persons have undoubtedly a right to complain of the treatment they received'.

[4] Compare the American (Boston) police strike of 1919 (also on wages, conditions, and Trade Union recognition), the Australian (Melbourne) of 1923, and the Egyptian of 1948.

'the strike was accompanied by threats, violence and intimidation . . . Many assaults on the constables who remained on duty were committed . . . Looting of shops commenced about 10 p.m. on August 1st, and continued for some days. In all about 400 shops were looted. Military were requisitioned, special constables sworn in, and police brought from other centres. During the looting one of the rioters was fatally shot while making an attack on the troops. The City was called upon to pay £122,000 in riot damage compensation, and was put to considerable expense in the employment of troops, special constables and police from other centres.'[1]

It was stated that gangs of men went from shop to shop, broke in, switched on the lights, 'and dragged pianos out into the street, utterly indifferent to the presence of soldiers, to volleys fired into the air, and even to direct rifle fire'. Railway workers in Liverpool and London declared themselves ready and willing to strike in sympathy with the police, whether their Unions approved or not, believing that the Government's opposition to a police Union was an indication of their attitude to Unions in general. The Criminal Statistics of 1919 provide a final commentary on this short police strike; for the number of riots, shop-breakings, malicious woundings, larcenies from the person, attempts at breaking in, and enterings with intent recorded in Liverpool during that year amounted to more than one-quarter of the total for the whole of England and Wales.

In general, however, crime — as distinct from the commission of offences which emergency legislation is designed to penalize — bears little relation to industrial unrest. It would be surprising if it were otherwise.

Political effects

Although the economic loss due to strikes, measured against a year's output, has been small in most years, the shock effect of a well-placed strike may, as we have seen, be very severe. Indeed, as industrial processes become more interdependent and integrated in a unified national economy, the potential effect of strikes is increased. A big strike tends to affect not only a single section of industry but industry as a whole; it may embarrass not a single employer but an Employers' Federation, and even the State itself. The State, moreover, even before it entered the lists as a direct employer of labour, has sometimes behaved towards strikers like an Employers' Federation writ large.

At this point the political implications of the strike dominate the economic. Neumann,[2] writing of the Germany of the early 'thirties, considered that only big sympathetic strikes held any prospect of success, and that — as perhaps in this country at various times before 1926 — big strikes might lead to civil war. William Gallacher, looking back at the big Clydeside strikes of the first world war, said that 'we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution'.[3]

Here one must distinguish, however imperfectly, between consciously political

[1] *Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Men Dismissed from the Police and Prison Service on Account of the Strike of* 1919 (*Cmd.* 2297 (1925), p. 22).
[2] *Trade Unionism, Democracy, Dictatorship* (W.E.T.U.C., 1935), p. 46f.
[3] *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936), p. 221.

and unconsciously political strikes.[1] In the consciously political category would come (*a*) revolutionary general strikes, (*b*) strikes with political objects and designed to force a Government's hand, and (*c*) strikes with economic objects, but timed and called for political reasons. In British experience, revolutionary general strikes have hardly moved out of the realm of the 'social myth'; strikes with political objects are rare; and strikes on economic issues timed for political reasons are probably uncommon also, although it has been contended that some of the strikes following the second world war were intended to embarrass the Government.

In the second category, of unconsciously political strikes, come (*a*) strikes undertaken for reasons directly connected with workers' living or working conditions, but where Government action would be necessitated (e.g. the general strike of July 1918 in the Isle of Man against the withdrawal of the bread subsidy, the big miners' strikes for the implementation of the Sankey Award, or the strikes during the second world war against the direction of surface workers underground), and (*b*) strikes with economic objectives but which, because of their effect at home (or abroad),[2] are liable to provoke Government action. Big strikes, or strikes in an important branch of industry where there is little possibility of anticipatory stock-piling, come into this class — especially of course strikes in public utilities and other essential services.

It is in this latter sense that the General Strike was a political strike despite its leaders' protestations: 'while the implications of the national strike are seen from opposite points of view by the extremists of reaction and the extremists of revolution, there is a curious similarity in the view taken by both, of the possibilities inherent in that weapon. Both envisage it as an attack upon the constitutional institutions of the country. By the one we are charged with using the strike to that end, and by the other we are abused for having failed to do so.'[3] It is in fact against this type of unconsciously political strike that most anti-strike legislation has been directed, on the grounds, no doubt, that 'we cannot judge the full significance of a strike by what the strikers think of themselves. As well might we value a person by what he thinks of himself . . . When millions of workers simultaneously cease work at the bidding of an authority other than the State it means a challenge to the authority of the State'.[4]

The community's interest in strikes has of course long been recognized. Robert Applegarth, before the Royal Commission of 1867, 'always held that men have no right to strike nor masters to lock-out, without first making the public acquainted with the causes that are likely to lead to a strike or lock-out, for . . . the interests of the public are of much greater importance than either those of the masters or the men, therefore . . . neither masters nor men have any right to

[1] In 1843 Mr. Justice Erskine drew the distinction between a general cessation of labour for seditious purposes, and a cessation of labour for a merely sympathetic purpose — and pronounced the former to be illegal; a decision which was upheld, although without any specific pronouncement on the legality of sympathetic strikes, by the Court of Appeal. See the Commons debate of May 12th, 1926, where these points were discussed in the light of the recently ended General Strike.

[2] Askwith (*Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), p. 171) notes that in 1911 — the year of the Agadir crisis — the Government was anxious to settle the Liverpool transport strike 'owing to the position of foreign affairs'.

[3] T.U.C. *Report* for 1926, p. 70 (President's address).

[4] Murphy, *Modern Trade Unionism* (1935), p. 91.

run the risk of paralysing any branch of industry without consulting the public'.[1] Some writers have so far confused the incidental effects of certain strikes with their causes as to maintain that the strike is not a conflict between capital and labour at all, but

> 'primarily a struggle between one group of workers and the remainder of the public, directed through and not against the employer. The most important social consideration in strikes of this kind [i.e. 'ordinary' strikes to determine wages, hours and working conditions] is not whether the result be victory or defeat for one party or the other, or simply a compromise, but whether there is a free field and a fair fight. For with a free field and a fair fight those conditions will result which will reflect the relative strength of the parties concerned. . . .'[2]

This writer makes it clear, however, that despite his *laisser-faire* approval of the principle that Might is Right, he would advocate compulsory settlement by State intervention 'in any strike when the public is suffering seriously' — a not uncommon attitude.

It was pertinently remarked in 1926[3] that

> 'There is a marked difference in the attitude of the public to strikes in different trades. A textile strike, for example, passes almost without comment . . . It is not that we could go indefinitely without new clothes. But we can wait so long for new clothes that we can let a textile dispute settle itself. We do not feel that it is our business. On the other hand, when a strike takes place in, say, the railways, many of us are put to inconvenience after an hour or two, and as food may run short and turbulence may begin, the Government is involved. What makes an industrial dispute political is not the ultimate importance of the industry — in the last resort we would dispense with railways more readily than go naked — but that a stoppage in it makes us feel our need of its services.'

Thus in many of the (relatively small) strikes of recent years — e.g. of milk distributors, Billingsgate fish porters, London street cleaners and Tower Bridge workers, Smithfield market workers, gas-workers and so on which followed the second world war — the Government felt itself compelled to organize blackleg services.

However, strikes which may inconvenience the public are impossible to define in advance. Any general powers to deal with them will negative the right to strike; and this, as Laski put it, is a form of industrial servitude since it means, ultimately, that the worker must labour on the employer's terms lest the public be inconvenienced.[4] Moreover, public inconvenience may be an indispensable weapon: 'when trade unions seek for what they regard as justice, one of their most powerful sources of strength is the awakening of the slow and inert public to a sense of the position. Effectively to do this, in a real world, it must inconvenience the public; that awkward giant has no sense of its obligations

[1] *First Report*, *Q.* 77, p. 4.
[2] GAGLIARDO, *Strikes in a Democracy*, *American Economic Review* (March 1941), pp. 50-1.
[3] OGILVIE, *Industrial Conflict* (1926), pp. 3-4.
[4] *Liberty in the Modern State* (1930), pp. 128-9 (Penguin edn.).

until it is made uncomfortable. When it is aroused, if, for instance, trains do not run, or coal is not mined, the public begins to have interest in the position, to call for action.'[1] In addition to any economic loss which the employer may suffer during a strike, a hostile public opinion may involve a certain loss of standing and goodwill which may, in the long run, affect his political and social status.

Strikes and public opinion

The importance of public opinion in strikes has been stressed from many different standpoints: 'public opinion can exert a very powerful influence on the determination of an industrial dispute';[2] strikes 'almost invariably fail when moral or financial support is withheld from the strikers by the public, while demands which the community as a whole believe to be justified are not generally resisted to the bitter end';[3] 'things were going rather badly when Lord Northcliffe threw the whole power of his newspapers into the struggle on behalf of the agents' (the insurance agents in the Pearl strike of 1919) 'and the struggle was won'.[4] Such statements could be multiplied.

It is true that the larger the stoppage, the greater likelihood of official intervention, but the greater also the danger of a hostile public opinion. Trade Unions have therefore often been hesitant to challenge the public directly. There are instances, of course, when an open challenge is made — as it was in a certain Canadian strike at the end of the first world war, by a policy of stopping all transport of food except to the strikers' families; but the attempt is more often made to turn opinion in the strikers' favour by effective publicity or by a considerate exemption — perhaps, as in 1911 and 1926, by means of special strikers' permits — of, say, hospitals or schools from the scope of a strike.[5] However, when all this has been said, it is difficult to maintain that 'public opinion' has very much effect on the tactics or the results of any strikes except the most spectacular. The results of some notable strikes — the 1889 dock strike, the 1912 coal strike, the 1919 railway strike and the Pearl Insurance strike mentioned above, for example — have been said to have been affected by public opinion; but such assertions are usually easier to make than to prove.

Public opinion sometimes breaks down along 'class' lines. According to the private report of the 1926 General Strike issued by *The Times*, the volunteer strikebreakers who assisted this newspaper consisted of M.P.s, 'members of half the clubs in London' — presumably not workingmen's clubs — undergraduates, schoolboys, naval officers, company- and bank-directors and so on;

[1] LASKI, loc. cit.

[2] Quoted by Sir L. Scott in the Commons (May 3rd, 1925), in the course of an argument for the compulsory ventilation of the 'facts' of disputes.

[3] *Report of the Unionist Social Reform Committee on Industrial Unrest* (1914), pp. 38-9.

[4] MCLAINE, *A Series of Articles on Trades Unionism*. The *Daily Mail*, indeed, offered £1000 to the strikers.

[5] Cf. Mr. W. Gosling, speaking on behalf of the transport workers in 1912; 'We are quite prepared, where there is the health of the public, the care of the infirm and children, and matters of that kind, concerned in a dispute of this kind, to do our part in protecting them, but . . . we do not want it to appear, because we are doing that, that there is a weakness on our part . . . Last year we were asked to release ice for hospitals, and we found it was for garden parties, and that kind of thing, in the West End.' (*Report upon the Present Disputes Affecting Transport Workers in the Port of London and on the Medway*, 1912; *Cmd.* 669, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 10.)

and ex-cavalrymen and polo players enrolled as mounted police. But even in the General Strike it proved impossible for the fierier elements on both sides to dragoon the non-combatants into a proper state of class-consciousness. Admittedly the T.U.C. made little attempt to appeal for public sympathy for the strikers; the strike newspapers and bulletins were designed mainly to maintain the strikers' morale. But the commandeering of newsprint by the Government was significant; and when Mr. Geoffrey Dawson of *The Times* wrote to Mr. Churchill objecting to this, Mr. Churchill replied:

> 'I do not at all agree with your idea that the T.U.C. have as much right as the Government to publish their side of the case . . . One of the difficulties of the present situation is that large numbers of people feel quite detached from the conflict; and they are waiting, as if they were spectators at a football match, to see whether the Government or the trades union is the stronger.'[1]

The Government, which had also monopolized the B.B.C.,[2] had no intention of letting the public make up its mind dispassionately; but the T.U.C., beyond having called out the printers, did not contest the point with any enthusiasm. It was left to *The Times*[3] to quote the exhortations of Moscow: 'only another step, and the excellent equipment of *The Times* may be used to produce a British *Izvestia*.' The step was not taken.

Nevertheless, to judge from Kingsley Martin's booklet on *Public Opinion and the General Strike*, non-combatant public opinion (even middle-class opinion, which is what most writers mean by the term) was by no means irrevocably aligned against the strikers; and in the coal strike there was undoubtedly considerable public sympathy for the miners. The then Prince of Wales himself contributed to the Somerset Miners' Distress Fund; and the Labour Party Women's Committee[4] and other bodies organized wide support for the men. 'Public opinion', in the form of public subscriptions, must at least have helped the strikers to hold out for a little longer than would otherwise have been possible.

However, in proportion as strikes have affected wider sections of the public, increased efforts have been made to forestall them. The power of well-organized Trade Unions to call a widespread strike, however ineffectively that power may have been used, or even if it was hardly used at all, has stimulated far-reaching changes in economic organization, ushered in all over Europe in the 1920s by political attacks on Trade Unionism. It is no accident that the tendency towards avoiding, discouraging, illegalizing, suppressing, or at least minimizing,

[1] *The Times* publication (*Strike Nights in Printing House Square*, 1926) which quotes this letter suggests, however, that 'the glittering prospect of a gigantic output was blinding the organizers of the *British Gazette* to any other consideration'.

[2] It had been clear that this would happen when, even before the strike, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was refused leave to broadcast. When the *Herald* pointed out that oscillation by people with valve-sets could be made to silence wireless propaganda over wide areas, its offices were raided. (See *The Secret History of the Great Strike* and *The Blackleg State*, articles which orginally appeared in *Lansbury's Weekly* for May 22nd, 1926, and were later reprinted as a pamphlet.)

[3] 8th May, 1926.

[4] See MARION PHILLIPS, *Women and the Miners' Lock-Out* (1927). The committee collected over £300,000.

shortening or localizing strikes has been so marked in our own recent industrial history. What is perhaps more remarkable, at first sight, is that this has been taking place with the general acquiescence and approval of the Trade Union movement itself.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the development of the Trade Union movement in Britain has been away from the position of a 'purely economic' organization struggling for the right to bargain with employers and at times venturing into Opposition politics, to a leading position in the State — with its bargaining rights fully confirmed, and free to concentrate on the widest political objectives: a development from 'irresponsible' independence of employers and Government to 'responsible' dependence.[1] The special reasons for Trade Union support of a Labour Government — and therefore for discouraging strikes so as not to alienate public sympathy — are obvious and need not be stressed again; but, quite irrespectively of a Labour Government being in office, the objectives — and therefore the strategy — of the movement have immensely broadened. So long as political methods of achieving social and economic objectives remain open to the workers, strikes are not likely to return to official favour. For many years now they have been less and less an instrument of Union policy, and increasingly a weapon of rebellion against Union authority — and sometimes State authority. Socially, however, they still fulfil the function (in some ways an increasingly important function) of calling immediate attention to weaknesses in the working of the ever-more-complex machinery by which industry is regulated; statistically, they provide a certain measure of these weaknesses and, more generally, of the distrust felt by rank-and-file workers of the system of regulation as a whole. In a society which is democratic in aim this should be enough to justify, in principle, their being permitted to occur, and also to act as a spur to the elimination of their causes by every possible means.

[1] 'C'est dans les cadres de l'Etat, mais sans lui être asservies, que les organisations syndicales doivent se développer. Elles sont destinées à jouer un rôle de plus en plus important, dans la cité future, à défendre non seulement les interêts professionels de leurs membres, mais à éclairer la politique économique des gouvernements, et à organiser la production selon leurs conceptions et leurs méthodes'. (ROSENTHAL, *La Paix Industrielle et le Mouvement Trade-Unioniste Contemporain en Grande Bretagne* (1931), p. 280.)

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

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STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Character of strike statistics

(a) *Limitations of the data*

> 'The morning I arrived the difficulty came to a head. I called at once to see the manager, and asked how many men were on strike. He replied that, indeed, there was no strike, that they were all just a happy family, but admitted that 200 men didn't report for work that morning. I then went out to talk with the agent of the union, and he told me excitedly that the plant would be closed completely by afternoon and that there were 15,000 out on strike at that moment. The true number proved to be about 9000. Their statistics were not very accurate. They were both distorting reality in trying to make their respective worlds more comfortable for them.'
>
> Presidential Address to the American Statistical Association (*Journal of the A.S.A.* (March 1932), p. 2).

IT is appropriate to preface the statistical tables on which the analytical part of the present study is based with some final explanatory and cautionary comments, for strike statistics have to be treated with especial care. Labour statistics generally have often been interpreted and used in a partisan fashion, and this is particularly true of strike statistics, which imply sharp conflicts of interest. The first strike statistics had the character, to some extent, of criminal statistics; the method of their compilation was sometimes primitive;[1] and even now one cannot, for many reasons, guarantee accuracy.

Difficulty of distinguishing strikes from lockouts

At first sight it would seem useful to have a breakdown of disputes into strikes and lockouts. In practice however, as was found by the United Kingdom Alliance of Organized Trades as far back as 1866,[2] no precise distinction can be made; for the distinction is as difficult and subjective as that between aggressive and defensive war. Strikes, moreover (and lockouts also), may themselves be either 'aggressive' or 'defensive': during an upswing the workers may seem to be taking the initiative and striking 'aggressively', while during a depression most disputes will appear to be either 'defensive' strikes or lockouts. For this reason some national statistics have distinguished between 'aggressive' and 'defensive' strikes, and others have separated strikes from lockouts (as was originally done in the United Kingdom). But since strikes may be provoked by employers and lockouts by workers, 'the question from which side the declaration is finally made is rather immaterial'.[3]

[1] In Austria, for example, a few regional inspectors (*Gewerbinspektoren*) were responsible for visiting all establishments in their area and for including in their general reports details of any strikes which had taken place; in the U.S.A. the first strike data were gleaned from what had appeared in newspapers; and so on.

[2] This organization was formed to support men locked out by their employers, but could never decide what constituted a lockout.

[3] I.L.O. *Report on Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes* (1926), pp. 21-2.

Sometimes, indeed, it is impossible to say even whether a dispute should be formally called a strike or a lockout;[1] some disputes are both, successively or simultaneously. The famous dispute of 1895 in the boot-and-shoe industry, for example, has been described as neither a strike nor a lockout but 'an industrial war, a measuring of strength between two opposing organizations';[2] and this has been true of many other disputes. One might instance the controversy whether the 'strike clauses' in Admiralty contracts could be invoked in the case of stoppages of work during the engineering dispute of 1897, as a result of which the first of the present series of agreements insisting on the employers' Managerial Rights was signed. In the course of this dispute the A.S.E. was obliged to impose special levies, which rose to the level of 2s. 6d. per week, on members remaining at work; and one of the main objects of the federated employers was to diminish the revenue obtained from this source by enlarging the area of the dispute.[3] Attempts have consequently been made in some countries to classify such disputes as 'disputes of a mixed character', although this is also of doubtful value, since the character of very many disputes is 'mixed'.

The distinction between strike and lockout, then, can provide no indication of where the 'war guilt' lies, and is of value only as showing what *forms* disputes appear to take at different times. The information given in the *Gazette's* monthly lists of 'Principal Disputes' suggests that between 1911 and 1945 lockouts have been most frequent and severe in the textile and metal groups, and that mining, the storm-centre of industrial relations, has been markedly free.[4] 'Principal' lockouts have in general accounted for a very small percentage of all 'Principal Disputes' (from 1911 to the end of the second world war, 2.2 per cent) and of the workers involved in them (5.9 per cent).

Two American writers attribute the infrequency of lockouts to the fact that 'employers can gain the same end by other means — for instance by imposing conditions which would provoke a strike';[5] but in so far as the lockout is used as a counter-weapon to strikes, it is clearly being superseded by other forms of strike-restraint.

Incompleteness of existing series of figures

The period 1911 to 1947 is long enough for many series of figures to be incomplete. As often happens, the compilation of certain series is undertaken for a time and is then discontinued for technical, political, or other reasons. Compared with the wealth of material available before 1914 in the Board of Trade's *Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs*, more recent data are tenuous.

[1] Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States* 1880-1936 (*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin* No. 651), pp. 3-4, gives a number of examples to illustrate this difficulty.

[2] Hoffman, *The Late Boot War, Economic Journal* (June 1895), pp. 264, 267-8. 'The majority on both sides of the conflict . . . had been led to believe, or had hoped, that their showing a bold front would be enough to avert a struggle, but the few who had the management of affairs knew better. There were those who declared the union's "war fund" of £60,000 was a constant menace to the peace of the trade, which a few weeks' strike or lock-out pay to members would scatter to the winds.'

[3] See *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edn.), vol. XXV, p. 1027.

[4] The great mining disputes of 1921 and 1926, however, which are often referred to as lockouts, are omitted. For a discussion of the classification 'Principal Disputes', see p. 305.

[5] Williamson and Harris, *Trends in Collective Bargaining* (New York, 1945), p. 58.

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No figures of stoppages not due to terms and conditions of employment

Stoppages of work 'due to disputes not connected with terms of employment and conditions of labour' are excluded from the statistics. This means the exclusion of directly political strikes and lockouts,[1] such as the anti-conscription, anti-war, and anti-'intervention' strikes at the end of the first world war — or the seamen's strikes of the same era which were engineered by Mr. Havelock Wilson and prevented Messrs. G. H. Roberts and Ramsay MacDonald from going to Petrograd at the Government's instance, and likewise stopped Mr. Arthur Henderson and M. Camille Huysmans from going to Paris. Moreover, strikes among the armed forces and police, even though they arise from dissatisfaction with 'terms of employment and conditions of labour', never appear in official records. Strikes in these categories, however, are rare.

No figures of very small, very short, or irregular stoppages

The *Gazette* does not record stoppages involving less than 10 workpeople or lasting less than 1 day, except where the aggregate number of days lost exceeded 100. This means the exclusion of a number of lightning strikes,[2] one- and two-hour demonstration strikes, as well as some of the less frequent partial stoppages which have been referred to as 'running-sore' strikes. As has been pointed out, lightning strikes seem to have become more frequent recently, and it is significant that the Ministry of Labour began in 1942 to classify strikes lasting less than a week by duration in days. The following figures illustrate the growth of very short strikes:

Strikes lasting not more than one day

	As percentage of all strikes	*Average number of workers directly and indirectly involved*
1942	34.8	215
1943	43.0	186
1944	44.7	154
1945	45.4	130
1946	46.1	134
1947	44.1	150

[1] Borderline cases of political strikes occasionally qualify for inclusion: for example, strikes in wartime against working with conscientious objectors, Irishmen of military age, German prisoners of war, and so on, have found their way into the lists of Principal Disputes and — presumably — into the general statistics. Some of these, of course, may have been strikes against a threatened dilution of labour, but others are more directly political, such as the strike (April 1918) which took the form of a refusal to work with men who had not struck previously for one day against Irish conscription. Sometimes it must be difficult to decide on the extent to which a stoppage is politically motivated; towards the end of 1921, for instance, a Tailors' Guild was formed in Glasgow, and its formation was at once followed by a lockout for refusing to accept a 12½ per cent wage reduction: 'strong opposition to the Guild movement is believed to be behind the action of the employers, who have stated their willingness to reach a settlement if the Guild closed down' (*Labour Research* (November 1921)).

[2] 'An interesting example of disputes in which the duration was too small to allow of their inclusion in the Department's statistics may be seen in a series of strikes of hotel workers which occurred in 1913. A number of hotels in London and the provinces were visited without warning by representatives of the Trade Union on various days extending over a period of many weeks. A list of demands for improved working conditions was presented to the management, and, if these were not granted, the waiters, kitchen staff, etc., were immediately withdrawn. In the great majority of cases the stoppage of work did not exceed one hour' (*Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs for* 1913 (*Cd.* 7658), p. xvi.)

There has probably, therefore, been a corresponding growth in even smaller and shorter strikes which are excluded from the statistics, and this may come to be a serious omission.

All ca' canny or go-slow strikes are, moreover, excluded owing to the lack of precise definition and therefore of the possibility of measurement.[1]

No separate figures of men and women involved

It would be of interest to have figures of men and women involved in strikes, in order to see whether the proportions corresponded in any degree with the proportions employed or organized. No such figures, however, are available.

No information on the degree of Trade Union support for strikes

Figures of Trade Unionists and non-Unionists involved in strikes are also not available, although a request for this information was made until about 1933.[2] It would still, however, be of interest to know the extent of organization among strikers.

More serious has been the lack of information on the proportion of official strikes. In U.S.A. statistics, a distinction was originally made between 'strikes ordered by labour organizations' and strikes 'not so ordered', but this is no longer done,[3] and no analogous distinction (*mutatis mutandis*) has ever been attempted here.

(b) *Ambiguities of classification*

The ambiguities of classification, however — some of which have been touched on as they arise — are on the whole more serious than the gaps in the data. The more important of these may now be briefly stated.

The single dispute

A single dispute means a more or less simultaneous stoppage of any number of workers for the same reasons. Thus a strike of 10 clothing workers in one small shop will appear as one dispute, but so will a General Strike of perhaps millions of workers in all the main industries. It may, moreover, be difficult to distinguish between a single strike which spreads from one firm or area to others, and a series of sympathetic strikes. Thus comparisons of the number or average size of strikes in particular years or industries may be uninformative or misleading.

Workers directly and indirectly involved

As Bowley[4] has pointed out, the categories of workers 'directly' and 'indirectly' involved are more or less arbitrary. The category 'indirectly involved' includes

[1] See pp. 18-9. Ca' canny is no doubt more important where strikes are wholly taboo—for instance in occupied Europe from 1940 to 1945. Cf. the *Economist* for November 24th, 1945, where it was suggested that the losses to production in the U.S.S.R. through ca' canny might exceed the losses through strikes elsewhere.

[2] See the sample form given in the *Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs for* 1913 (*Cd.* 7658), p. 224.

[3] 'At the present time . . . strikes and lock-outs are classified according to whether or not most of the strikers belong to a union and act as an organized group when the strike is declared and settled' (PETERSON, *Strikes in the United States*, 1880-1936, pp. 31-2).

[4] *An Elementary Manual of Statistics* (1934 edn.), pp. 186-7.

other workers employed at the establishment where the strike occurs who are thrown out of work because of the strike, but not workers employed elsewhere. In fact the figure of 'indirectly involved' could hardly provide more than an indication of the extent to which key workers strike without being supported sympathetically within the establishment in question.

The 'directly involved' may, of course, be affected in very different ways: they may strike directly, or sympathetically, or they may be affected by a general lockout (imposed as the retort, perhaps, to a limited strike). But although a very rough criterion of 'direct involvement' is possible (as for example in determining the eligibility for unemployment benefit[1] of workers involved in strikes), it is clearly impossible to assess the *degree* to which workers are involved: 'certain employees initiate a strike and the others are willingly or unwillingly drawn into it. It would be necessary for a psychologist to have a personal interview with each employee in such situations in order to determine the number who were responsible for or who actually favoured the strike. Also, as attitudes change as the strike progresses, this number would vary from day to day.'[2] This is obvious from the fluctuations of strike votes.[3]

Working days lost

The number of 'working days lost' (i.e. the duration of the strike in days multiplied by the number of workers involved) is the main clue to the economic importance of a strike, and has already been discussed from this point of view. The enumeration of 'working days lost' is, however, imprecise because the actual end-date of a strike is often impossible to determine: men may return to work in driblets, or section by section. Moreover, the 'working day' means different things for different firms according as they operate a one-, two-, or three-shift system; and, in so far as calendar days are taken as the basis of computation, according to the rest-days and holidays allowed — and so on.[4]

An example of the difficulties of classification in practice

The bearing of some of the points mentioned above emerges from the following example.

The number of strikes in coal-mining for 1947 was given in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* as 1053, as against 1329 in 1946 — a decline of 21 per cent. The National Coal Board, however (which took over on January 1st, 1947), gave a figure of 1635 coal-mining strikes for 1947.[5] The Coal Board's Report remarked on a *rise* in the number of strikes from 1329 to 1635 (since the Board relied perforce on the Ministry's figure for the year 1946). This rise of 23 per cent was explained in the Coal Board's Report as being due to two 'special causes' — first, the lifting, on June 30th, 1947, of a ban on wage changes at particular collieries, and second, the anomalies arising from the introduction of the five-day week.

[1] See pp. 160-1
[2] PETERSON, op. cit., p. 9.
[3] See for example the figures of voting in the 1912 and 1920 coal strikes, as given by ROBERTSON, *Narrative of the Coal Strike, Economic Journal* (September 1912); and I.L.O. *Reports* (*Series A.* 1920-21), No. 13.
[4] U.S.A. statistics use the more precise term 'man-days *idle*' — because the 'losses' during a strike may in fact be made up in various ways.
[5] National Coal Board, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for* 1947, p. 17.

When the discrepancy in the figures was pursued further, however, it became clear that strikes were reported independently to the Ministry of Labour's Registered Offices and to the National Coal Board's Regional Directors. Further, the Coal Board's figures differed from the Ministry of Labour's in the following respects. The Coal Board's figures were said to have included (1) all strikes, irrespective of the number of men involved and of duration; (2) limited stoppages due to restrictive practices and go-slow tactics, as well as stoppages occurring because of mechanical breakdowns when the men would not await repairs which it was estimated could be completed within their shift.[1] Moreover (3) where district and sympathetic stoppages took place, the Coal Board counted the stoppage at each colliery separately.[2]

Hence the discrepancy between the two sets of figures. Yet if a reckoning on the Coal Board's principles had been able to be made for the year 1946, the number of strikes recorded would presumably have been considerably higher than the Ministry of Labour's figure of 1329.[3] Thus it might not have been necessary for the Coal Board to have explained an increase in the number of strikes, but on the contrary to have welcomed a decline.

Again, the *Gazette* gave the total of 307,900 workers as involved in 1053 strikes; the Coal Board's returns apparently gave 303,452 workers as involved in 1635 strikes. Possibly the concept of workers 'directly' and 'indirectly' involved may have contributed to this further discrepancy.

This instance is quoted merely as an example of the danger of combining estimates compiled by independent sources using different criteria — and, indeed, of the general difficulties of enumeration.

The breakdown by industries

Although monthly tables of strikes by industries are given in the *Gazette*, these tables are not revised to accord with the annual tables. The annual tables themselves have been comparable on the basis of seven industrial groups only — a form of classification which has consequently had to be used in this study — as follows: (i) mining and quarrying; (ii) metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc.; (iii) textiles; (iv) clothing; (v) building, public works contracting, decorating, etc.; (vi) transport, and (vii) other industries.[4]

'Other industries' includes a few well-organized sections (e.g. the printers), together with a great number of isolated and unorganized workers; the 'strike-prone' minority being practically submerged. Nevertheless, long-term information on the six other categories is of value; indeed, if the number of categories were very much larger (one set of national labour statistics includes as many as 75) it would be too rigid for a quickly-changing structure of industry.

[1] These latter would presumably not qualify for inclusion in the *Gazette* in so far as they were not technically concerned with terms of employment or conditions of labour.

[2] This was probably a big source of discrepancy, because of the scale of the Grimethorpe dispute.

[3] A proportionate addition to the Ministry of Labour's figure for 1946, for instance, would give 2064 disputes.

[4] These groups were naturally heterogeneous. If the industries of the Ministry of Labour's old unemployment insurance classification are allocated to one or other of the seven groups, then 'mining and quarrying' included 7 industries, 'textiles' 13, 'metal, engineering, shipbuilding, etc.' 23, 'transport' 6, 'building, decorating, public works contracting, etc.' 2, 'clothing' 6, and 'other industries and services' no less than 45. (In 1950, however, the Standard Industrial Classification was adopted for strike statistics.)

The 'Principal Dispute'

The classification 'Principal Dispute', which is adopted in the *Gazette's* monthly lists, is somewhat arbitrary; but these lists are the only systematic source of information about separate strikes, and in particular about their regional incidence. The inclusion of strikes under this heading is determined to some extent by the space available, the endeavour being made, so far as possible, to take in the largest[1] strikes in each industry.

But this means that strikes in minor or luxury industries (for example, cricket bat making, postcard and playing-card finishing, funeral undertaking, mineral water manufacturing, umbrella and walking-stick making, whip making, gramophone-record pressing, artists' colour mixing, manicuring, cigar making, flint-glass bottle making and the like) may qualify for inclusion even though the industry is a minor one simply because strikes in it are unusual and therefore of 'human interest'. Moreover, the inclusion of these small strikes may sometimes mean the exclusion of much bigger strikes in more 'strike-prone' industries which are already well represented.

All in all, between 1911 and 1938 — the last year for which we have the appropriate information — 1261 (almost two-thirds) of the 1959 strikes involving 1000 workers or more were listed as Principal Disputes, 1013 smaller strikes being also included. The lists cover, of course, a small proportion of all strikes but a large proportion of all workers involved — and therefore, as their title implies, a large proportion of big strikes in most years.

Other difficulties of classification

Other classifications of strikes present further problems. In particular, the classifications by causes and results, because they are inevitably more subjective than mere enumeration, give rise to more than usually formidable problems of interpretation. These problems have already been discussed in the appropriate sections.

Suggestions for improving the form of the statistics

With the adoption of the Standard Industrial Classification for the statistics of strikes, some previous shortcomings have been eliminated. A few further suggestions concerning these statistics may however be made. (1) A regional breakdown would be of value: very few strikes are so widespread that they would fall outside a regional classification. (2) It would be desirable to have statistics of official and unofficial strikes: if one is to form a reasoned judgment on the significance of industrial disputes, some appreciation of the extent to which the strike continues to be used as a deliberate instrument of Union policy seems vital. (It would, no doubt, be obvious in some cases whether the strike was official or unofficial; in others it should be possible to obtain this information from Union headquarters. Doubtful cases — where, for example, a strike was supported by one Union and repudiated by another — could be classified as such.) (3) It would be of interest to know more about the extent to which individuals struck more than once in the same year. Information has been given for some time of 'duplication' in the figures of workers involved for coal-mining

[1] The classification may possibly be influenced to some extent by the *duration* of the strikes in question.

(for 1949 it was also given for water transport and docks) and for 'all industries'; but to state the actual number of individuals who struck more than once in the same year is presumably impossible by present methods. True, the collection of more precise material would mean asking employers for a good deal more information than at present, but, if this could be done only for those industries where the problem of strikes is most acute, it would be of considerable value. (4) The statistics of strike-results might possibly be resumed for simple wage-increase and wage-decrease strikes, where the criteria of classification could be made fairly rigid. (5) It might be worth while to amplify the regular footnote in the *Gazette* concerning the distinction between the 'directly' and 'indirectly' involved, especially since the practical significance of this distinction has been called in question. Although the distinction may have to be retained — particularly for the statistics of the causes of strikes and, if these are resumed in any form, of results — it would seem to be worth stating that the figures of 'directly' and 'indirectly' involved are estimates usually obtained from the parties themselves (and not precise figures related, for example, to eligibility for unemployment benefit). (6) It would seem preferable to use the more precise term 'man-days idle' instead of 'working days lost'. (7) It would be useful to attempt the compilation of absenteeism statistics in a form comparable with that of strike statistics.

In addition, it would be of great value to have more information on the formal structure of industrial relations in various industries. This could take two forms: (*a*) a comprehensive survey of the scope and coverage of collective agreements, industry by industry (on the lines of the attempt which was made in 1934), and (*b*) a comparison of the various current practices in dealing with particular problems, e.g. provisions for arbitration, disputes procedures, etc. (on the lines of what has been done in the United States).

* * *

TABLES

The word 'strikes' is used, for reasons given in the text (p. 143 n. 1), to cover both strikes and lockouts.

Sources (except where otherwise stated):

Board of Trade Labour Gazette (before 1919) and *Ministry of Labour Gazette*.

Abstracts of Labour Statistics Nos. 18 and 22 (*Cmd.* 2740 and 5556) (1927 and 1937).

Annual Abstracts of Statistics Nos. 84 and 85 (1947 and 1948).

If a table does not cover the whole period 1911-47, and unless a particular shorter period is specified in the heading, it may be taken that no published information exists for the years omitted.

The figures represent the latest revisions available.

[library stamp]

TABLE I

Number of Strikes (S), Number of Workers Directly and Indirectly Involved (W), and Number of Working Days Lost (L), by Industries

(*b*) relates to strikes *beginning* in year, (*p*) to strikes *in progress* during year.

	MINING AND QUARRYING			TEXTILES		
Year	*S* (*b*)	*W* (*b*)* (000)	*L* (*p*) (000)	*S* (*b*)	*W* (*b*)* (000)	*L* (*p*) (000)
1911	179	141	4,101	133	221	1,434
1912	154	1,107	31,594	135	56	3,698
1913	192	214	1,656	240	93	2,019
1914	176	273	3,777	97	22	765
1915	85	298	1,657	67	33	369
1916	75	64	326	74	61	1,161
1917	148	281	1,183	70	65	710
1918	173	383	1,263	75	268	1,704
1919	250	925	7,713	65	488	8,160
1920	248	1,411	17,508	126	80	1,443
1921	170	1,256	72,961	28	380	6,939
1922	169	124	1,387	21	5	68
1923	197	189	1,212	35	37	1,228
1924	204	137	1,628	50	11	200
1925	175	136	3,740	59	172	3,173
1926	69	1,091	146,456	33	17	188
1927	115	67	695	27	5	36
1928	100	82	461	33	25	695
1929	162	80	666	58	400	6,752
1930	158	149	671	44	127	3,392
1931	155	281	2,859	38	163	3,717
1932	115	53	292	105	300	5,811
1933	117	72	455	43	7	85
1934	150	74	373	57	16	88
1935	233	194	1,385	64	14	106
1936	290	181	969	79	13	97
1937	470	382	1,501	84	23	156
1938	374	174	701	42	7	84
1939	417	207	612	73	8	100
1940	386	190	508	60	10	77
1941	482	153	338	42	7	36
1942	555	257	862	47	10	26
1943	862	296	889	52	6	17
1944	1,275	571	2,495	48	6	47
1945	1,319	244	644	41	4	10
1946	1,339	216	424	36	6	43
1947	1,066	309	915	25	4	13

(For notes see last page of table.)

Table 1 (*continued*)

	METAL, ENGINEERING AND SHIPBUILDING			TRANSPORT		
Year	*S* (*b*)	*W* (*b*)* (000)	*L* (*p*) (000)	*S* (*b*)	*W* (*b*)* (000)	*L* (*p*) (000)
1911	253	93	1,265	91	443	2,656
1912	231	83	1,357	68	154	2,980
1913	391	153	2,985	115	84	1,184
1914	232	51	1,308	53	13	87
1915	189	46	357	75	25	152
1916	105	75	305	44	28	103
1917	225	429	3,063	32	26	184
1918	420	242	1,499	48	59	277
1919	335	403	12,248	113	571	4,200
1920	339	179	3,402	129	65	509
1921	151	63	4,420	42	25	291
1922	115	369	17,484	56	10	107
1923	103	61	5,997	61	58	1,031
1924	136	71	1,400	81	245	1,543
1925	94	24	184	54	29	73
1926	62	14	221	42	20	167
1927	69	16	81	16	2	7
1928	51	8	60	16	2	11
1929	80	39	768	21	7	13
1930	70	10	92	22	5	25
1931	61	12	99	17	5	13
1932	46	4	48	25	12	194
1933	68	15	112	30	27	272
1934	81	15	160	31	11	44
1935	73	17	93	36	24	82
1936	148	47	206	66	26	86
1937	220	107	778	50	52	748
1938	138	44	243	49	14	40
1939	181	56	332	34	12	56
1940	229	40	163	36	5	13
1941	472	154	556	58	16	54
1942	476	141	526	51	16	35
1943	612	170	635	68	53	181
1944	610	194	1,048	82	32	85
1945	591	123	528	156	128	1,491
1946	449	162	1,084	105	60	161
1947	291	111	579	119	140	628

Table 1 (*continued*)

Year	BUILDING S (b)	BUILDING W (b)* (000)	BUILDING L (p) (000)	CLOTHING S (b)	CLOTHING W (b)* (000)	CLOTHING L (p) (000)
1911	24	3	72	44	9	88
1912	53	6	106	66	31	601
1913	192	40	814	73	15	173
1914	177	38	3,184	50	7	79
1915	63	16	130	40	6	28
1916	73	6	103	44	16	156
1917	51	7	68	55	12	142
1918	107	36	186	67	25	298
1919	134	22	391	77	28	239
1920	242	42	696	68	34	727
1921	135	26	538	29	5	81
1922	77	10	179	23	3	46
1923	65	21	394	24	4	28
1924	66	115	3,145	31	5	45
1925	58	6	85	31	5	38
1926	43	3	38	12	1	8
1927	34	8	129	10	9	199
1928	38	3	84	9	1	25
1929	40	3	28	17	1	11
1930	47	4	46	21	1	10
1931	57	12	145	21	1	16
1932	29	3	36	24	2	32
1933	20	1	9	20	2	6
1934	44	8	172	25	4	36
1935	46	3	37	28	3	44
1936	77	8	44	27	12	155
1937	98	8	39	33	10	72
1938	110	14	115	36	7	33
1939	122	35	131	25	6	13
1940	81	26	73	34	9	40
1941	77	11	36	20	6	16
1942	66	13	29	13	5	19
1943	71	13	25	23	3	7
1944	48	5	7	30	3	5
1945	36	3	5	29	9	68
1946	77	7	24	37	14	111
1947	35	5	24	22	4	15

OTHER INDUSTRIES

Year	S (b)	W (b)* (000)	L (p) (000)	Year	S (b)	W (b)* (000)	L (p) (000)
1911	148	42	539	1930	60	11	163
1912	127	25	554	1931	71	16	134
1913	256	65	973	1932	45	5	75
1914	187	43	678	1933	59	12	133
1915	153	24	260	1934	83	6	86
1916	117	26	292	1935	73	16	208
1917	149	52	297	1936	131	29	272
1918	275	103	648	1937	174	15	119
1919	378	154	2,018	1938	126	14	118
1920	455	121	2,283	1939	88	13	112
1921	208	46	642	1940	96	19	66
1922	115	31	579	1941	100	13	43
1923	143	35	782	1942	95	14	30
1924	142	29	463	1943	97	16	54
1925	132	69	659	1944	101	10	27
1926	61	8	155	1945	121	20	89
1927	37	1	27	1946	162	61	311
1928	55	3	52	1947	163	50	259
1929	53	3	49				

Table 1 (*continued*)

	ALL INDUSTRIES (totals)			(All industries)	
Year	*S* (*b*)	*W* (*b*)* (000)	*L* (*p*) (000)	*W* (*b*)* directly involved only (000)	*L* (*b*)† (000)
1911	872	952	10,155	824	10,126
1912	834	1,462	40,890	1,232	38,255
1913	1,459‡	664‡	9,804‡	497‡	10,239‡
1914	972	447	9,878	326	9,362
1915	672	448	2,953	401	2,969
1916	532	276	2,446	235	2,367
1917	730	872	5,647	575	5,865
1918	1,165	1,116	5,875	923	5,892
1919	1,352	2,591	34,969	2,401	36,330
1920	1,607	1,932	26,568	1,779	28,858
1921	763	1,801	85,872	1,770	82,269
1922	576	552	19,850	512	19,652
1923	628	405	10,672	343	10,949
1924	710	613	8,424	558	8,361
1925	603	441	7,952	401	8,907
1926	322§	1,154§	147,233§	1,144§	146,298§
1927	308	108	1,174	90	867
1928	302	124	1,388	80	1,390
1929	431	533	8,287	493	8,287
1930	422	307	4,399	286	4,453
1931	420	490	6,983	424	7,013
1932	389	379	6,488	337	6,435
1933	357	136	1,072	114	1,024
1934	471	134	959	109	1,061
1935	553	271	1,955	230	1,951
1936	818	316	1,829	241	2,008
1937	1,129	597	3,413	388	3,136
1938	875	274	1,334	211	1,332
1939	940	337	1,356	246	1,354
1940	922	299	940	225	941
1941	1,251	360	1,079	297	1,077
1942	1,303	456	1,527	350	1,530
1943	1,785	557	1,808	453	1,832
1944	2,194	821	3,714	716	3,696
1945	2,293	531	2,835	447	2,847
1946	2,205	526	2,158	405	2,182
1947	1,721	623	2,433	489	2,398

* Figures of workers involved in strikes *in progress* are not given before 1919. From this date onwards they may be found in the *Gazette*.

† Whereas the figures in column *L* (*p*) relate to all strikes *in progress* during the year in question, and therefore include working days lost in some strikes which began in the *previous* year, the figures in column *L* (*b*) relate to strikes *beginning* in the year in question, and therefore include days lost in the *subsequent* year where strikes extended beyond the year in question. The figures in column *L* (*b*) are thus on the same basis as those in columns *S* (*b*) and *W* (*b*); they are not, however, available by industries.

‡ Since the statistics relate to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the 1913 figures exclude the Irish (Dublin) General Strike of 1913, which involved 20,000 workers and accounted for a loss of 1,700,000 working days.

§ Excluding the General Strike, which involved 1,580,000 workers and accounted for the loss of 15,000,000 working days. The *Gazette* gave no figures by industries of the workers who struck in sympathy with the miners in 1926. Rough estimates have however been made; see, for example, ROBERTSON, *Narrative of the General Strike of* 1926, *Economic Journal* (September 1926).

TABLE II

'Overlapping' Strikes

Number of strikes (*S*) in progress during year in question which were reported as having begun in the year previous; and number of workers (*W*) directly and indirectly involved in these strikes

Year	*S*	*W* (000)
1911	27	27
1912	40	169
1913	50	9
1914	51	38
1915	?	2
1916	13	3
1917	?	(—)
1918	?	35
1919	36	11
1920	56	87
1921	49	28
1922	36	4
1923	18	2
1924	12	3
1925	25	4
1926	25	17
1927	13	6
1928	8	(—)
1929	8	1
1930	8	2
1931	11	2
1932	9	3
1933	7	2
1934	8	(—)
1935	11	8
1936	14	6
1937	12	15
1938	10	1
1939	8	(—)
1940	3	(—)
1941	10	2
1942	5	(—)
1943	6	2
1944	11	5
1945	3	1
1946	14	4
1947	10	3

(—): less than .5.

Source: the figures are based on the latest information given in the *Gazette*; no details are given elsewhere. There is no direct record of the number of strikes *in progress*, and, as has been said, no figures of workers involved in strikes *in progress* are given before 1919. For most years it is, however, possible to estimate these by adding the figures in this table to the appropriate totals in Table I — i.e. to *S* (*b*) and *W* (*b*) for all industries.

TABLE III

Regional Incidence of Major Strikes ('Principal Disputes' involving 1,000 workers and over), *by Industries*, 1911 *to June* 1945

S — number of strikes.
W — number of workers directly and indirectly involved.

Region	Mining & quarrying		Textiles		Metal, engineering and shipbuilding		Transport		Building		Clothing		Other industries and services		All industries	
	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)	S	W (000)
South Wales	198	1493.5	1	1.6	31	122.3	11	25.1	1	10.0	1	1.5	4	6.1	247	1660.1
West Riding	172	1222.0	19	330.7	25	110.6	10	27.3	1	1.1	10	29.7	7	19.9	244	1741.3
Northern Ireland	—	—	10	25.2	24	147.0	4	8.3	2	2.5	1	17.3	1	3.7	42	204.0
Lancashire and Cheshire	25	119.4	38	2112.0	68	229.4	34	172.4	14	24.0	10	30.5	24	64.8	213	2752.5
Scotland	82	458.0	24	192.9	63	291.1	22	74.4	14	33.0	2	3.1	24	53.5	231	1106.0
North and Central Wales	10	27.3	4	9.8	2	2.9	—	—	2	6.0	—	—	2	2.2	20	48.2
Northern Rural Belt	17	55.5	—	—	6	17.1	11	36.8	1	1.7	1	1.1	6	12.0	42	124.2
West Midlands	41	126.4	3	11.8	59	260.1	8	17.0	5	9.7	—	—	11	45.8	127	470.8
Northumberland and Durham	112	301.2	—	—	15	111.1	3	4.6	1	1.4	—	—	1	1.0	132	419.3
London and South East	12	24.5	2	7.6	41	115.8	51	381.0	20	73.4	8	35.5	34	100.2	168	738.0
East Midlands	34	177.7	11	37.9	9	22.6	—	—	2	2.7	11	25.4	2	5.0	69	271.3
Eastern Counties	—	—	—	—	3	10.8	2	4.0	1	10.0	3	4.9	4	17.2	13	46.9
South Western Counties	2	6.0	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	4	6.0	—	—	—	—	7	13.4
All regions	705	4011.5	113	2730.9	346	1440.8	156	750.9	68	181.5	47	149.0	120	331.4	1555	9596.0
('Widespread'* strikes)	13	4605.9	2	5.0	17	561.5	17	1053.4	4	113.0	—	—	24	113.9	77	6452.7
United Kingdom	718	8617.4	115	2735.9	363	2002.3	173	1804.3	72	294.5	47	149.0	144	445.3	1632	16048.7

* i.e. not confined to one region.

TABLE IV

Strikes of Different Lengths

Number of strikes lasting —

Year	*Under 1 week*		*1 and under 4 weeks*		*4 weeks and over*		*Total*
	No.	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*
1911	411	47.1	313	35.9	148	17.0	872
1912	384	46.0	267	32.0	183	22.0	834
1913	661	45.3	491	33.7	307	21.0	1,459
1914	408	42.0	333	34.3	231	23.7	972
1915	359	53.4	223	33.2	90	13.4	672
1916	272	51.1	177	33.3	83	15.6	532
1917	397	54.4	236	32.3	97	13.3	730
1918	609	52.3	424	36.4	132	11.3	1,165
1919	522	38.6	507	37.5	323	23.9	1,352
1920	614	38.2	606	37.7	387	24.1	1,607
1921	292	38.3	270	35.4	201	26.3	763
1922	248	43.0	180	31.3	148	25.7	576
1923	335	53.3	182	29.0	111	17.7	628
1924	353	49.7	211	29.7	146	20.6	710
1925	309	51.2	185	30.7	109	18.1	603
1926*	175	54.2	92	28.5	56	17.3	323
1927	159	51.6	96	31.2	53	17.2	308
1928	156	51.7	94	31.1	52	17.2	302
1929	274	63.5	99	23.0	58	13.5	431
1930	254	60.2	110	26.1	58	13.7	422
1931	255	60.7	112	26.7	53	12.6	420
1932	224	57.6	104	26.7	61	15.7	389
1933	235	65.8	88	24.7	34	9.5	357
1934	307	65.2	114	24.2	50	10.6	471
1935	364	65.8	135	24.4	54	9.8	553
1936	571	69.8	191	23.3	56	6.9	818
1937	818	72.4	248	22.0	63	5.6	1,129
1938	618	70.6	198	22.6	59	6.8	875
1939	(705?)	(75.0?)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	940
1940	(750?)	(81.0?)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	922
1941	(1,130?)	(90.0?)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,251
1942	1,147	88.0	(154)	(11.8)	(2)	(0.2)	1,303
1943	1,621	90.8	(159)	(8.9)	(5)	(0.3)	1,785
1944	1,993	90.8	(189)	(8.6)	(12)	(0.6)	2,194
1945	1,981	86.4	(259)	(11.3)	(53)	(2.3)	2,293
1946	1,895	85.9	(267)	(12.1)	(43)	(2.0)	2,205
1947	1,503	87.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,721

* Including General Strike.

Note. Figures in brackets are estimates. Those for 1939-41 are approximations based on information given in the *Gazette*; those for 1942-46 are derived from the *Gazette* figures in conjunction with those of the *Annual Abstract*. For 1947 the *Gazette* figures do not accord with those of the *Annual Abstract* (No. 85), and such estimates cannot be made.

Certain other information of this kind, some of which has been used in the text, is omitted here for reasons of space. In fact, statistics exist also under the following heads: —

Strikes of different lengths: workers involved (1911-47); working days lost (1925-38).

Strikes of different sizes (i.e. according to number of workers involved): strikes (1911-38); workers involved (1911-38); working days lost (1911-47).

Strikes of different aggregate duration (i.e. according to number of working days lost): strikes (1911-38); workers involved (1911-38); working days lost (1925-38).

TABLE V

Causes of Strikes

S = number of strikes.
W = number of workers directly involved.

Year	(1) *Wage increase*		(2) *Wage decrease*		(3) *Other wage questions*		(4) *Hours of labour*		(5) *Employment of particular classes or persons*		(6) *Other working arrangements, rules and discipline*		(7) *Trade Unionism*		(8) *Sympathetic action*		(9) *Miscellaneous questions*		(10) *All causes*	
	S	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)
1911	360	332	41	16	156	33	30	13	139	33	66	68	72	326	7	3	1	(—)	872	824
1912	311	114	49	8	168	897	26	9	143	35	50	42	66	121	14	4	7	2	834	1,232
1913	753	237	36	16	167	27	47	14	231	53	72	20	129	105	12	15	12	10	1,459	497
1914	425	61	47	106	131	34	28	11	180	31	56	14	82	50	11	10	12	9	972	326
1915	398	314	28	6	63	18	17	2	82	13	18	9	55	32	2	4	9	3	672	401
1916	332	135	18	4	48	12	16	15	70	39	22	14	17	5	3	3	6	8	532	235
1917	426	223	21	26	74	33	4	3	116	192	42	21	35	69	9	7	3	1	730	575
1918	659	380	26	32	85	40	25	162	200	154	73	29	78	108	7	3	12	15	1,165	923
1919	679	1,051	63	543	115	90	137	461	196	129	82	61	51	25	14	15	15	26	1,352	2,401
1920	888	1,353	51	44	140	53	41	13	259	176	93	45	89	27	18	52	28	16	1,607	1,779
1921	72	8	393	1,680	95	17	31	10	91	23	40	14	24	7	10	10	7	1	763	1,770
1922	29	5	255	169	101	32	18	6	77	23	52	263	31	10	8	1	5	3	576	512
1923	76	11	148	94	129	42	16	6	87	24	52	43	91	105	18	17	11	1	628	343
1924	214	305	78	79	144	38	13	2	121	35	58	26	57	18	19	54	6	1	710	558
1925	116	39	83	217	106	19	15	9	141	57	54	22	72	31	6	6	10	1	603	401
1926*	54	9	33	1,057	61	21	16	1	80	16	29	8	28	13	14	1,595	8	4	323	2,724
1927	35	5	71	18	59	8	22	13	68	29	22	5	26	6	3	5	2	1	308	90
1928	26	6	63	15	80	17	15	1	69	13	29	7	13	1	6	20	1	(—)	302	80
1929	42	4	82	411	100	25	12	4	107	25	40	7	40	15	3	2	5	(—)	431	493

* Including General Strike.

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)		(7)		(8)		(9)		(10)	
	S	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)
1930	38	11	91	126	120	19	19	97	79	17	45	11	28	5	1	(—)	1	(—)	422	286
1931	32	2	114	218	86	19	33	24	84	16	52	140	18	5	1	(—)	—	—	420	424
1932	21	2	131	279	78	11	10	4	89	16	43	17	14	6	3	2	—	—	389	337
1933	36	4	60	22	92	20	4	(—)	90	34	44	26	24	5	6	2	1	1	357	114
1934	79	19	49	6	100	21	18	2	121	32	62	15	37	9	3	3	2	1	471	109
1935	85	15	42	8	128	33	11	5	148	40	84	35	36	20	16	72	3	2	553	230
1936	162	40	34	3	173	34	23	7	221	53	99	35	84	20	20	45	2	4	818	241
1937	323	130	19	3	246	48	43	40	265	54	100	23	110	22	15	64	8	4	1,129	388
1938	139	26	34	4	166	36	41	7	257	60	130	34	92	35	11	6	5	3	875	211
1939	226	41	51	8	205	49	25	9	217	66	124	26	74	31	15	14	3	2	940	246
1940	218	38	33	6	233	56	27	7	196	37	164	29	35	10	12	39	4	3	922	225
1941	332	65	55	10	362	82	55	13	188	58	212	38	33	16	9	13	5	2	1,251	297
1942	394	102	55	18	363	108	47	13	166	57	234	34	18	5	12	4	14	9	1,303	350
1943	381	124	94	22	501	97	52	11	214	65	439	49	31	12	15	12	58	61	1,785	453
1944	339	78	78	9	733	414	57	11	229	61	674	104	40	10	18	23	26	1	2,194	716
1945	291	101	—	—	699	118	89	34	291	50	782	108	76	17	23	7	42	12	2,293	447
1946	254	82	—	—	707	88	63	15	287	74	778	78	81	47	16	8	19	13	2,205	405
1947	182	75	—	—	625	84	89	90	230	56	527	77	30	4	18	99	20	4	1,721	489

(—): less than .5.

TABLE VI

Causes of Strikes, by Industries; Number of Workers Directly Involved (000)* *in the Ten Years* 1927 *to* 1936

	Wages	*Hours*	*Employment of particular classes or persons*	*Other working arrangements etc.*	*Trade Unionism*	*Sympathetic action*	*Miscellaneous questions*	*Total (all causes)*
Mining and quarrying	411.7	140.3	186.7	88.3	68.0	117.9	9.2	1022.1
Textiles	800.7	3.9	14.6	147.1	2.4	14.4	0.0	983.1
Metal, engineering, shipbuilding	66.0	3.7	25.2	11.7	8.8	1.8	0.0	117.2
Transport	32.6	7.2	19.2	45.7	2.4	9.3	0.0	116.4
Building	32.7	1.3	10.6	0.7	3.3	0.5	0.1	49.2
Clothing	16.1	0.6	8.2	0.5	1.6	2.0	5.0	34.0
Other	59.6	1.1	10.2	3.7	6.0	0.3	0.1	81.0

* Based on percentages given annually in the *Gazette* between 1925 and 1936. Because figures for 1926 tend to be misleading, the above totals exclude 1926 and 1925.

TABLE VII

Methods of Settlement of Strikes

S = number of strikes.
W = number of workers directly involved.

Year	*Conciliation and arbitration*		*Direct negotiation*		*Return to work on employers' terms without negotiation*	
	S	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)
1911	101	527	635	278	67	16
1912	87	72	620	286	69	22
1913	142	110	1,129	361	117	23
1914	81	134	717	172	108	17
1915	102	275	408	95	105	24
1916	116	92	343	116	47	15
1917	199	196	461	167	31	32
1918	315	326	747	435	56	62
1919	191	209	1,042	1,694	54	269
1920	190	123	1,184	1,593	122	57
1921	68	21	573	1,719	62	28
1922	63	10	408	476	59	24
1923	71	58	478	229	51	54
1924	95	207	500	316	64	33
1925	57	200	432	183	68	10
1926	26	6	222	1,127	45	10
1927	20	12	227	69	30	5
1928	19	5	199	55	55	19
1929	37	396	279	79	80	16
1930	48	91	265	174	68	20
1931	37	167	274	206	62	48
1932	40	135	228	52	74	146
1933	21	5	234	70	71	37
1934	29	10	314	80	93	16
1935	38	13	373	171	108	29
1936	52	28	544	129	176	81
1937	66	36	665	180	346	170
1938	67	13	524	131	233	64
1939	54	14	607	159	251	71
1940	59	15	544	145	293	65
1941	137	39	730	195	362	61
1942	128	42	685	163	470	137
1943	96	35	918	203	722	152
1944	87	19	918	418	1,176	270

Table VII (*continued*)

Year	*Replacement of workers or closing of works*		*Other methods*	
	S	*W* (000)	*S*	*W* (000)
1911	69	3	0	0
1912	55	2	3	850*
1913	69	3	2	(—)
1914	61	3	5	(—)
1915	47	6	10	1
1916	20	1	6	11
1917	24	2	15	178
1918	33	1	14	99
1919	54	2	11	227
1920	98	5	13	1
1921	43	1	17	1
1922	36	1	10	1
1923	19	1	9	1
1924	42	2	9	(—)
1925	32	7	14	1
1926	27	1	3	1,580†
1927	22	1	9	3
1928	23	1	6	(—)
1929	28	1	7	1
1930	34	1	7	(—)
1931	39	2	8	1
1932	42	4	5	(—)
1933	25	1	6	1
1934	31	3	4	(—)
1935	28	1	6	16
1936	35	2	11	1
1937	44	2	8	(—)
1938	45	3	6	(—)
1939	23	1	5	1
1940	16	(—)	10	(—)
1941	8	1	14	1
1942‡	0	0	18	7
1943	0	0	49	64
1944	0	0	13	9

(—) : Less than .5.

* Including national coal strike.

† Including General Strike.

‡ Two strikes were still unsettled when returns were published.

TABLE VIII

*Results of Strikes**

E = settled in favour of employers.
C = compromised.
Wrs = settled in favour of workers.

Year	*Number of strikes*			*Number of workers directly involved* (000)		
	E	*C*	*Wrs*	*E*	*C*	*Wrs*
1911	273	378	221	72	698	54
1912	248	356	230	177	137	918
1913	371	663	425	93	243	161
1914	325	407	240	49	213	64
1915	248	267	157	57	266	78
1916	140	270	122	70	112	53
1917	161	340	229	77	395	103
1918	270	547	348	204	503	216
1919	306	701	345	575	1,489	337
1920	507	710	390	189	1,401	189
1921	315	296	152	100	1,644	26
1922	222	243	111	64	425	23
1923	183	258	187	79	179	85
1924	235	312	163	100	404	54
1925	189	260	154	64	124	213
1926†	126	129	67	1,083	40	21
1927	118	129	61	28	37	25
1928	144	116	42	32	44	4
1929	164	178	89	34	436	23
1930	155	196	71	222	46	18
1931	166	146	108	66	204	154
1932	168	133	88	162	152	23
1933	148	134	75	48	52	14
1934	186	149	136	36	40	33
1935	213	191	149	63	54	113
1936	349	252	217	120	66	55
1937	546	331	252	247	98	43
1938	435	237	203	113	53	45
1939	450	245	245	126	54	66
1940	*418*	*168*	*124*	*103*	*34*	*22*
1941	*536*	*282*	*146*	*97*	*79*	*53*
1942	*576*	*241*	*167*	*157*	*72*	*46*
1943	*810*	*291*	*258*	*241*	*95*	*55*

* After 1939 no figures of results of strikes *beginning in each year* were published. Monthly figures relating to results of strikes *ending in each month* were given up to the end of 1943. These monthly figures covered about three-quarters of all strikes from 1940 to 1943, and about four-fifths of the workers directly involved.

† Excluding General Strike.

TABLE IX

Results of Strikes, by Industries; Number of Workers Directly Involved (000)* *in the Ten Years 1927 to 1936*

E = settled in favour of employers.
C = compromised.
Wrs = settled in favour of workers.

	E	*C*	*Wrs*	*Total*
Mining and quarrying	399.7	380.8	241.6	1022.1
Textiles	266.0	566.3	150.7	983.0
Metal, engineering, shipbuilding	36.1	63.7	17.4	117.2
Transport	57.5	37.9	21.0	116.4
Building	14.8	21.9	13.1	49.2
Clothing	13.6	13.3	6.5	33.4
Other	20.3	47.4	13.2	80.9

* Based on percentages given annually in the *Gazette* between 1925 and 1936. Because figures for 1926 tend to be misleading, the above totals exclude 1926 and 1925. (A very small proportion of strikes in certain years were classified as 'unsettled', and these have been omitted.)

TABLE X

Results of Strikes, by Causes: Number of Workers Directly Involved (000) *in the Thirteen Years 1927 to 1939*

E = settled in favour of employers.
C = compromised.
Wrs = settled in favour of workers.

	E	*C*	*Wrs*	*Total*
Wage increase	139.5	135.6	29.8	304.9
Wage decrease	317.1	778.0	25.0	1120.3
Other wage questions	160.7	116.2	61.8	338.7
Hours of labour	166.2	22.9	24.2	213.3
Employment of particular classes or persons	194.7	146.9	112.7	454.3
Other working arrangements, rules and discipline	132.1	69.4	179.5	381.0
Trade Unionism	34.9	25.7	118.5	179.1
Sympathetic action	133.2	39.0	64.4	236.6
Miscellaneous questions	15.8	2.5	0.8	19.1

('Unsettled' strikes omitted.)